



AFRICA
SCIENCE
DIALOGUE

TOP

10

FACTS ABOUT
PESTICIDE USE
IN KENYA



INTRODUCTION

Kenya's agricultural sector contributes 34% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) valued at over KES 3.3 billion, making it the backbone of the country's economy. The sector generates about 60% of the country's export revenues. It provides employment to roughly 18% of the formal workforce, and contributes to about 60% of informal employment. Beyond its direct impact, agriculture also supports an additional 27% of GDP through its strong linkages with manufacturing, distribution and service industries. Undoubtedly, agriculture is the key enabler to attainment of the country's food and nutrition security.

In recent years, however, the sector has faced several challenges. Top among these include the adverse effects of climate change, weather variability, and increased pest and disease outbreaks. Building resilience against these shocks remains a strategic focus. Pest control products play a key role in attenuating the effects of climate change, more so in addressing the challenge of increased incidence of pests and diseases. These products protect harvests, remove the hardship of hand-weeding, and improve productivity thereby making food affordable.

The main chemical pesticides used in the country are herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, acaricides, miticides, fumigants and nematicides. Other synthetic agrochemicals used are plant growth regulators, public health insecticides, biocides, wood preservatives and technical grade materials. This booklet provides an overview of essential facts about pest control products.

AGRICULTURAL SECTOR CONTRIBUTES:



34%

of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Valued at over

KES 3.3 billion



60%

of export earnings



18%

of formal employment and



60%

of the informal employment.



1.

Pesticides control weeds, pests and diseases contributing to increased food production

The use of pesticides in Kenya has effectively protected crops from weeds, pests and diseases, helping farmers avoid significant yield losses. Herbicide use, in particular, has immensely helped in substituting manual weeding, thus cutting on costs and time. As a result, it has reduced physical drudgery especially for women who form close to three-quarters of Kenya's agricultural labor force. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that up to 40% of crop yields can be lost to pests and diseases for failure to use effective pest control measures such as pesticides. Large scale food production is not viable without the informed but responsible application of pesticides.



2.

Kenya has a robust pesticide regulatory framework

Pest control products in Kenya are regulated by the Pest Control Products Board (PCPB), a statutory organization established under the Pest Control Products Act, Cap 346. PCPB is mandated to regulate importation and exportation, manufacture, distribution and use of pesticides. All pesticides registered for use in the country undergo a rigorous risk and safety assessment prior to approval by PCPB. Further, Kenya is signatory to key international conventions on chemical safety and conforms to international standards and best practices on pesticide use and compliance.

3.



Using personal protective equipment (PPE) safeguards your health by preventing exposure to pesticides

The use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) prevents exposure to pest control products. Use of ISO-certified PPEs is recommended and forms a key part of responsible pesticide use. In case of accidental exposure, users are advised to seek immediate help from the Poison Information Centre (0800 720 021 / 0800 730 030).

4.



Approved pesticides have labeling guidelines to ensure safe use

Approved pesticides always contain detailed instructions for the safe handling, application and storage of the product. They specify the correct dosage, explain proper methods of application, outline the best pre-harvest intervals, stipulate re-entry periods, inform about persistence, and outline recommended personal protective equipment to prevent exposure. Following label instructions carefully ensures efficient and safe use of pesticides.

5.



Dispose of empty pesticide containers safely; never reuse them

Proper disposal of pesticide containers is essential for protecting human health and the environment. Immediately after emptying a pesticide container, it is recommended that the user rinses it three times. The rinse water should be applied to the intended target of the pesticide. After rinsing, puncture and flatten the container if it is made of plastic to prevent reuse. Store all empty containers in designated collection bags and deliver them to the nearest approved collection centre. To get in touch with your nearest collection centre, contact aak-GROW on +254 20 2464812 or +254 20 2464811.

6.



Pesticides are designed and formulated to minimize environmental harm

All approved pesticides in the Kenyan market have a predetermined and acceptable persistence period. Before they are manufactured and licensed for use, pesticides undergo soil impact assessment tests to ensure that they do not stay active in the soil longer than the desired period. Responsible use of pesticides ensures environmental safety and sustainability.

7.



Responsible use of pesticides promotes food safety

Applying the correct amount of pesticides as per the label instruction safeguards consumer safety. Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) are set 100 times lower than harmful levels to keep produce safe. Strictly observing the number of days between the last pesticide application and harvesting as indicated on the label safeguards food safety. It is important that pesticide products are used within the recommended expiry period. Using pesticides registered by the Pest Control Products Board assures food safety, since all registered products undergo thorough safety assessments before approval. All players including farmers, transporters, traders and consumers should handle food appropriately to ensure its safety.

8.



A pest control product may have been registered in one country but not in another

Pest presence and pressure vary between countries. For example, pests like locusts or fall armyworm are absent in most EU countries. Differences in climate and farming practices mean that some countries may not need certain pest control products. Additionally, regulatory systems differ – some, like the EU, assess products based on hazard criteria rather than actual risk. For a pesticide to be available in the Kenyan market, it has to have been duly registered and approved by the PCPB.

9.



Responsible pesticide use protects Kenya's export markets

Misuse of pesticides disrupts trade. Failure to comply with residue limits can lead to export rejections and financial losses. It is important that users adhere to label instructions to ensure farm produce meets international market standards. Observing Pre-Harvest Interval (PHI) to keep pesticide residues within approved limits (MRLs) is strongly advised. Further, implementing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) will reduce over-reliance on synthetic pesticides while maintaining crop protection. Safe, responsible and compliant pesticide use preserves access to global markets and strengthens the country's floriculture and fresh produce sectors.

10.



Awareness of pesticide regulations is essential for safe food production

Knowledge of regulations helps farmers apply pesticides correctly, minimizing risks to consumers. Continuous education ensures farmers stay updated on changes in pesticide regulations and best practices. Collaborating with regulatory bodies and agricultural organizations can provide valuable insights about pesticide laws. It is important to always engage consumers about pesticides use and regulations to build trust and transparency in food production. Farmer education on the correct use of pesticides should be more deliberate. Government agencies and industry players should allocate more financial resources to support sustained training, awareness and capacity-building initiatives around correct use of pesticides.

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