

Joint Statement at the Occasion of  
No Pesticide Use Day  
on the Concerns of **Chemical Pesticides and Fertilizers**  
Pailin Province, 03<sup>rd</sup> December, 2009

We all are members of national and international NGOs actively working to preserve natural resources in the Kingdom of Cambodia would like to send a Joint Statement on the Concerns of Chemical Pesticides and Fertilizers that adversely impact on human health, environment, economy and national society to the Royal Government of Cambodia. The main objective of the Joint Statement is to raise concerns on issues caused by importing, managing, monitoring, and inspecting agricultural chemical pesticides and fertilizers being sold in some provinces of the Kingdom of Cambodia and draw attention of the Royal Government, in particular, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and relevant agencies on the issues of using chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

Cambodia is not a country that produces chemical pesticides and fertilizers, but these are imported and distributed on the markets nationwide without going through proper inspection of any specialized institutions. At the moment, Cambodian farmers shift toward modern practices via the use of agricultural chemical substances. These, indeed, do help increasing crop yields, nevertheless such an increase is a temporary phenomenon, meaning that they only have short-term effect, but many problems occur and stay for a long-period of time, such as having serious effect on farmers and users' health and these people have to afford high costs on health care while they earn a merely low income generation. The degradation of environment quality and biodiversity, the losses of domestic varieties..., etc. all of these are of the negative impact of chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

Cambodian farmers who use chemical and fortified substances, and chemical-based animal feeds are forced to borrow money from credit agencies and private money lenders. Although farmers try to get access to external loans to purchase chemical substances, such as chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and modern-screening seeds for farming and harvest substantial crops in return, their living standards are not improved, on the other hand, it is certain that they are trapped in chemical substance vicious circle and become indebted no matter how hard they work, and after all only to repay back loans.

In Cambodia, direct spending on the use of chemical pesticides for cropping is estimated to be USD 20 million per year (CEDAC, Report on Pesticides Use and consequence in Cambodia, 2004, page 46). These products sold on the markets came in with foreign language labels and Cambodian farmers cannot read instructions on how to appropriately use them as per technical requirements. Among these, those labeled in Thai represent 37.6%, Chinese 1.6%, Malaysian 0.2%, English 7.6%, Cambodian 4.8%, and Vietnamese 48.2% (CEDAC, Report on Pesticides Use and consequence in Cambodia, 2004, page 24). There are 116 items of prohibited pesticides, 40 items of permitted type, but with conditions, and 136 items authorized (Pesticide Use in Cambodia 2008 National IPM Program, page 24).

We appeal to continue to provide stronger support to take control of agricultural inputs and to reduce the utilization of chemical pesticides and fertilizers and help support organic produce in order to improve farmers' living standards to move toward a Cambodian

society of sustainable agriculture with good wellbeing and eventual poverty reduction. With pride of such a modern technology, all NGOs would like to raise our **concerns** as follows:

### **Recommendations and Suggestions:**

#### **1. To Farmers:**

- Reduce and move toward eliminating the utilization of chemical substances (pesticides and chemical fertilizers)
- Promote organic agriculture (using existing inputs available in the communities and villages)
- Together help creating new appropriate initiatives matched to the needs of communities and villages.
- Introduce safe options, including integrated pest management cropping techniques, such as application of multiple farming systems, namely rice farming, fish culture, vegetables growing, frog raising, and organic agriculture like organic rice farming, organic vegetable growing these should be encouraged.

#### **2. To Consumers**

- Increase support given to natural agricultural products
- Raise consumer' awareness on various problems of chemical pesticides and fertilizers' consequences
- Engage in all activities pertaining to the prevention and reduction of chemical pesticides and fertilizers
- Learn more the impact of chemical pesticides and fertilizers through media and publications
- Consumer Association should be created and networked so that it can access to legal protection on the right to make decision of whether to use products with or without chemical substances.

#### **3. To National and International NGOs:**

- The Pesticide Reduction Network in Cambodia shall further its work on pesticide reduction and lobby the Government to inspect and control import of chemical pesticides and fertilizers
- Promote and motivate households who apply organic farming techniques
- Increase supports to farming communities to network with farmers on seeds selection and production
- Develop human resources, coordinate market information sharing and other information to communities, farmers, and help identifying markets for organic products
- Conduct researches and disseminate appropriate techniques to farmers to increase organic farming productivity
- Increase and continue disseminating and practicing of organic farming techniques to farmers and farming communities
- Priorities should be given to multiple cropping and agricultural sustainability of farming products

- Urge the Royal Government, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to prevent and control the importation and utilization of agricultural supplies.

#### **4. To Universities and Researcher**

- Increase further the roles of research on the impact of pesticides on health, environment and economy
- Promote the application of techniques to safeguard crops free of pesticides and chemical fertilizers
- Conduct research studies related to the utilization of biological agents

#### **5. To Government Institutions and National Agencies:**

- The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries shall help promoting various approaches such as SRI and IPM that may help increasing products and promote the reduction of pesticide-based cropping.
- The Royal Government of Cambodia should pay attention to the risks of current pesticides used in Cambodia
- Help addressing and fairly distributing land to farmers, especially farming land so that farmers would have opportunities to earn proper livelihoods
- The General Department of Agriculture should strengthen better law enforcement to expand more important role on inspection and control of pesticides
- Promote the implementation of the Sub-decree on the Management of Agricultural Material. To be successful, public education program, search for options, specific and explicit implementation are to be in place to make sure that farmers and users can avoid harm from pesticides.
- The Royal Government of Cambodia should present its willingness to address pesticide issues by prohibiting the use of these harmful chemical substances. Many practical solutions such as tax reduction on organic products, media and radio program campaigns, and educational TV spots to make farmers fear of using pesticides
- Continue to organize workshops on chemical pesticides and fertilizers to importers and sellers, so that they understand the required formalities and procedures
- Continue to strengthen the mechanism of dissemination via radio programs and TV shows on chemical pesticides and fertilizers.
- Convince toward having the legislation of agricultural pesticides and open for comments to broad civil societies, beneficiaries, and concerned agencies.

In conclusion, for the sake of national progress similar to other countries worldwide, the Kingdom of Cambodia does need development. However, parallel to the benefits of development, we should also carefully think over the aspects of conservation and adverse effects stemming from pesticide and chemical fertilizer utilization, being the root of poverty reduction. The Royal Government, especially private companies should pay attention to and think more on balancing profit making and the issue of degrading the environment caused by application of pesticides and chemical fertilizers exposed to our people. We all would like to appeal to RGC, relevant ministries, departments, training institutions, NGOs, and all stakeholders to pay attention to and monitor all activities of private companies that import

and distribute pesticides and chemical fertilizers to ensure best interests of the people and national society be protected under a common direction of poverty alleviation in Cambodia.

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