

# ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND CONVENTIONS

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International agreements, treaties and conventions, such as the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, are intended to support the responsible and effective use and management of chemicals and, in some instances, more specifically pesticides.

The International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides (the Code) is the first and most comprehensive agreement regarding pesticide management. It was initially adopted in 1985 and its current revised version of 2002 was published in 2005 [1]. The Code was one of the first voluntary codes of conduct in support of increased food security, while at the same time designed to protecting human health and the environment. The Code has established voluntary standards of conduct for all public and private entities engaged in, or associated with, the distribution and use of pesticides. Since its adoption it has served as the globally accepted standard for pesticide management. For the last 20 years, the Code, in conjunction with its supplementary guidelines, has been one important instrument in assisting countries to put in place or strengthen pesticide management systems. The Code demonstrates that pesticide management should be considered a part of chemical management as well as of sustainable agricultural development. The basic function of the Code is to serve as a framework and point of reference for the judicious use of pesticides for all those concerned with pesticide matters, particularly until such time as countries have established adequate and effective regulatory infrastructures for the management of pesticides.

Originally included as part of the voluntary Code (and for general chemical in the London Guidelines), the principle of “Prior Informed Consent” was enshrined in 1998 in the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade [2]. These voluntary information exchange programmes were borne out of concern about the “dramatic growth” in chemical production and trade during the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the potential risks posed by hazardous chemicals and pesticides as a consequence of their trade. Countries lacking adequate infrastructure to monitor import and use of these chemicals were regarded as particularly vulnerable. The 1992 Rio Summit decided that the voluntary procedure needed to be made more effective by agreeing to a mandatory international convention, which eventually entered into force in 2004.

Becoming increasingly aware that persistent organic pollutants (POPs) may pose major and increasing threats to human health and the environment, in May 1995 the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) started an assessment process of an initial list of 12 POPs, (9 of which were for pesticidal use), which resulted in the decision in 1996 that international action, including a legally binding instrument was required to reduce the risks to human health and the environment arising from the release of the 12 POPs. In consequence, the Stockholm Convention was developed, adopted in 2001 and it entered into force in 2004 [3]. It covers the initial 12 POPs, but also includes criteria and a procedure for identifying additional POPs as candidates for future international action. Based on these provision, the Conference of Parties at its 4<sup>th</sup> meeting in 2009 decided to list a further 9 chemicals (four of which are pesticides) in the Annexes of the Convention.

The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) was established by the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) in Dubai in February 2006 [4] It is a policy framework for international action on chemical hazards. Its scope includes environmental, economic, social, health and labour aspects of chemical safety and covers agricultural and industrial chemicals, with a view to promoting sustainable development and covering chemicals at all stages of their life-cycle. It supports achievement of a central goal agreed at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development: to ensure that by 2020 chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimise significant adverse impact on the environment and human health. The ICCM adopted the Dubai Declaration on International Chemicals Management and the Overarching Policy Strategy (OPS). It also recommended the use and further development of the Global Plan of Action (GPA) as a working tool and guidance. Together, these three documents constitute

the SAICM. As far as pesticides are concerned, there is considerable overlap between the SAICM and the Code of Conduct. In fact, there are a number of similarities between elements the OPS and the Code and quite a number of actions listed in the GPA are identical with pesticide management advice provided by the Code.

The presentation will discuss the effectiveness of the international agreements and conventions, their interrelationship and their effect on national regulatory systems concerning pesticide. It will also assess if and how these agreements/conventions fit, or can be made to fit, into a concept and principles and practices of “good pesticide regulation”, that promote investment into new solutions and provide access to technology to enhance agricultural productivity whilst also assuring safety and sustainability, and encompass shared responsibility and compliance. In this way, good regulation and agricultural output combine to be the formation for environmentally sustainable, economically feasible and socially responsible action.

### **References**

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