CleanFarms Kenya Model for Obsolete Pesticide Management

In September 2007, Kenya became the first country in Africa to initiate the CleanFarms project to manage obsolete pesticides stocks. The project aims to take inventory of all obsolete pesticides and empty containers in the private and public sectors, and safeguard those that pose a hazard to the environment. So far, Kenya’s CleanFarms programme has safeguarded nearly 170 tonnes of obsolete pesticides, including over 30 tonnes of highly toxic products. The first 30 tonnes, along with 15 tonnes of contaminated packaging material, were shipped to Europe for incineration in March 2012.

The first step of CleanFarms was finding obsolete stocks. In collaboration with CropLife Kenya and the Ministry of Agriculture, organisers developed an outreach strategy to identify previously unknown stocks of obsolete pesticides in the private sector. The ministry encouraged registration of these products by declaring an indemnity period when obsolete pesticide holders could come forward without being fined. The project also created an awareness campaign to outline general safety procedures when handling pesticides and used radio spots to promote the registration and collection process.

Next, with the help of newly trained extension officers, CleanFarms completed an inventory of stocks in the private and public sectors. It identified a total of 200 tonnes of obsolete pesticides and more than 25,000 empty containers.

Safeguarding obsolete pesticides continues although CleanFarm organisers hope to complete the process before the end of 2012. Many components are in place, including construction of a temporary storage facility in a secured compound of the Ministry of Agriculture; training ministry staff and others to record activities and stock during safeguarding; and sourcing special equipment such as United Nations-approved drums to contain materials. International experts have already secured a local waste company, ECCL, to do the actual safeguarding, while the Government of Kenya has requested financial assistance from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to dispose of the remaining safeguarded materials.

A pilot empty pesticide container collection programme is also underway. Smallholder farmers can now dump empty containers in collection bins strategically placed within the communities of Timau and Nanyuki. ECCL will collect the containers. Because most of them are not triple-rinsed, they will be cut and shipped to Europe for incineration. However, as more farmers and plantations learn about the environmental importance of triple-rising in the near future, empty containers are expected to be rinsed and then recycled in Nairobi.

Other African countries are taking note of the CleanFarms project and representatives from Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Tanzania have visited Kenya to see firsthand how the programme works. Officials from these countries learned about the outreach campaign, collaboration with and role of the
Ministry of Agriculture, use of inventory forms, database management, safeguarding principles and other activities. Representatives also visited the field to talk with stakeholders. It is hoped that they will help establish CleanFarms programmes in their countries.