

CropLife Kenya Begins Pesticide Container Management Project

Since 2002, several private initiatives in Kenya have sought to collect empty pesticide containers. Now CropLife Kenya is trying to establish a sustainable collection system across the whole country. Currently, a pilot project is underway in two communities.

In 2007, CropLife Kenya, with the assistance of CropLife International, carried out a pesticide container management survey. It aimed to establish the number of containers imported annually as well as the status of empty container handling and disposal. Although CropLife Kenya had already trained thousands of farmers in the triple-rinse system and how to properly dispose of empty containers, the survey showed that the disposal of such containers still remained a challenge in the country. Even if farmers triple-rinsed the containers, they could not safely dispose of them due to the absence of a sustainable container management programme.

The survey also showed a consistent increase in the use of pesticide containers every year, with plastic ones accounting for 50 per cent of the total volume. Observers estimated that by the year 2010, the number of empty plastic pesticide containers would reach 20 million.

In 2007, the CleanFarms project in Kenya started to take inventory of obsolete pesticides and empty pesticide containers in the country. It soon became clear that users had a significant number of empty containers and that they were being used for non-approved purposes, including storing water, cooking oil and food items.

This discovery prompted CropLife Kenya and the CleanFarms project, in close collaboration with the public sector, to coordinate a pilot container management programme in two communities. Under the project, farmers could deposit triple-rinsed, empty containers, in 23 collection bins placed around the communities. Responsibility for the collection bins was assigned to farmers or local leaders in each community. A local waste company, ECCL, which is also involved in the safeguarding of obsolete pesticides, collected the containers.

After two months of the programme, most bins were only partially filled and most containers were not triple-rinsed. In addition, other materials, including empty alcohol bottles, were deposited in the bins. In response, CropLife Kenya organised several programmes in the communities to raise awareness about the proper use of the collection bins, which quickly improved participation and results. More empty pesticide containers were collected and other deposited materials were drastically reduced.

Presently, the collected pesticide containers are being stored in special facilities, but they will soon be sent to Nairobi for recycling.

