

Obsolete Stocks of Crop Protection Products CropLife International's Position, established 1995

During the past decade, stockpiles of pesticides have been identified in a number of developing countries. A large proportion of the products in the stockpiles are now obsolete and require to be rendered safe, then disposed of. These stockpiles are owned by national government departments or agencies who decide upon their disposal.

CropLife International has been actively engaged with this issue for a number of years and its member companies are voluntarily contributing both money and resources for its resolution.

How the problem arose

Obsolete stocks of crop protection products have accumulated particularly in countries where procurement was governed by planned economies rather than farmers' needs. In Africa, many obsolete stocks of crop protection products are leftovers from donations provided under international development assistance programmes, often decades ago. Much is the remainder of products bought for the control of locusts, where emergency stocks of insecticides were held to combat sudden outbreaks of these major pests.

CropLife's voluntary contribution

In 1995, the member companies of CropLife International established the following policy:

- Member companies of CropLife International will provide assistance for the disposal of stocks that they originally manufactured or supplied.
- The level of assistance is an individual company decision decided on a case-by-case basis after verification of the stocks and their origin. Such contributions are given on the basis of goodwill and a desire to see the elimination of potentially hazardous waste from the environment.
- The future prevention of obsolete stocks is a major concern of CropLife International, requiring the participation of all stakeholders in the supply and use of crop protection products.

In order to provide a focus for industry support and to facilitate co-operation between industry, governments and other stakeholders, CropLife International also formed an 'Obsolete Stocks Project Team' in 1995. The Obsolete Stocks Team supports a multi-stakeholder approach contributing organisational / management expertise and technical knowledge to facilitate disposal projects and prevention activities.

Aspects in the management of disposal projects

Verification of suspect obsolete stocks in the concerned countries is essential to ensure that useable products are not destroyed unnecessarily. Examinations have repeatedly revealed that not all the products in stockpiles are obsolete; some can still be used, or repacked or reformulated to become useable again. Where re-conditioning is not possible, verification gives information on the origins of products and enables the best disposal option to be selected and disposal costs to be determined.

CropLife International emphasises the need for a multi-stakeholder approach to finding disposal solutions. While the main responsibility for disposal lies with the owner of the stocks, the participation of other stakeholders is frequently essential for the successful completion of a disposal project. Stakeholders in this context include manufacturers, suppliers, donor agencies, aid organisations, exporting governments and regional bodies, as well as hazardous waste disposal companies.

Obsolete stock disposal projects are time-consuming and complex undertakings involving many areas of expertise such as project planning, stakeholder identification, fund seeking, inventory taking, contractor selection and trans-boundary movement authorisations for waste disposal overseas (e.g. Basel Convention). This complexity of operation is often at odds with the need for rapid action to render safe old obsolete products.

Guidance on disposal solutions can be found in the industry guidebook – “*Disposal of Unwanted Pesticide Stocks*”, which is available in English and French language versions.

Prevention of obsolete stocks

CropLife International is concerned that continued overstocking and poor storage of crop protection products will repeat the problem of obsolete stocks in the future. Industry therefore wishes to work with governments in the implementation of preventative measures adapted to local situations.

Important steps to avoid obsolete stocks:

- Evidence confirms that a private market system helps to prevent obsolete stocks, because private enterprises thoroughly check the needs of farmer customers for products, manage the level of stocks to an appropriate minimum and adjust supplies to meet seasonal demand.
- Tender guidelines have been developed by various organisations (GTZ, FAO, World Bank) that are intended to help governments that centrally purchase crop protection products to tender for the right product, amount and quality. Countries are urged to follow these guidelines.
- Member companies of CropLife International wish to co-operate with donors and governments to analyse the demand for crop protection products and to advise on the management of stocks and distribution of products.

- Member companies of CropLife International offer advice and quality control services to enable the timely use of products that have the potential to become obsolete.
- Stocks of locust control products are frequently stored for many years, ahead of potential locust outbreaks. Member companies of CropLife International are willing to support governments, donors and other stakeholders in the management of after sales stocks.
- Since 1991, CropLife International has been carrying out training on the responsible use of crop protection products in many countries, including African countries, under the Safe Use Initiative. The prevention of obsolete stocks is part of this training.

Disposal projects: actions taken by industry in various countries

Practical examples of cooperation between companies or national associations of the crop protection industry and government agencies, aid organisations and other institutions for the disposal of obsolete pesticide stocks are described at www.croplife.org.

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Member companies of CropLife International are Aventis CropScience, BASF, Bayer, Dow AgroSciences, DuPont, FMC, Monsanto, Sumitomo and Syngenta. The companies Cheminova, Makhteshim Agan and Shell cooperate with CropLife International in disposal projects.