CropLife Uganda signs new contract with IFDC-REACH

CropLife Uganda, with support from CropLife Africa Middle East signed a contract with IFDC-REACH covering a project on the development of Spray Service Providers association management.

The project will support the SSP in the registering and training of their associations. These activities will be implemented between July and November 2019.

An SSP association would implement the following activities which are beneficial for its members namely; advocating for favourable policies, such as the halting of the influx of counterfeit agro inputs, creating common storage facilities for agro inputs, creating linkages and facilitating deals and discounts with input suppliers to improve access to agro inputs and equipment, organizing training programs on technical issues (Integrated Pest Management, Fall Armyworm, etc.) and business.

Also included is the facilitation of large contracts (for 20 or more hectares), promoting SSP services among farmers (through radio jingles, and farmers’ meetings), assisting and acting on behalf of members who for example have a dispute with a client on payment, sharing information with all members on new pesticides available on the market or on laws and regulations that affect SSP activities. Lastly, the setting up of collection points for empty containers and agree with suppliers on the return of empty containers.

Betty Atto

Chief of Party of IFDC-REACH, David Slane, handing over a copy of the signed contract to Solomon Seruwo, Chairman of CropLife Uganda

Resilient Efficient Agribusiness Chains (REACH) project

Innovation mechanisms for True Potato Seed and rice value chains for sustainability

Partners in Sustainable Agriculture
Business Linkage Initiative for the SSPs Associations in Nigeria

CropLife Nigeria in cooperation with Propcom Mai-Karfi organized a business-to-business (B2B) meeting with the SSPs from the 9 - 11 July 2019. In attendance were executives of SSP associations from seven Local Government Authorities in Kaduna, Kano and Jigawa states. Other participants were representatives from six-member companies of CropLife Nigeria, 2 financial institutions, namely Union Bank and Microvis, a microfinance bank, milling companies, seed processing companies and various farmers’ organizations.

The aim of the meeting was to create business linkages within the various value chains and ensure such linkages can benefit each of the participating organizations. It was an avenue for one-on-one discussions during which ideas were shared and feedback from the companies on the way forward in business with the farmers. Another topic related to how the SSP associations can become distributors of the pesticides to interior communities who do not have easy access to genuine pesticides. Discussions covered also included the possibility for the financial institutions to support the SSPs with funds to help promote their services.

Siji, Executive Secretary CropLife Nigeria
MRLs, Consumer Safety and Trade in Africa Agricultural Produce Workshop

The Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs), Consumer Safety and Trade in Africa’s Agricultural Produce workshop was held in Johannesburg on 4 and 5th June 2019 bringing together over 50 participants from 10 countries representing regulators, Ministries of Trade, Agriculture and Health officials, grower groups and Regional Economic Communities, among others.

The workshop provided a platform for participants, who shared experiences on the current application of MRLs by countries, acquainted themselves with changes in the regulatory and policy environment around MRLs and Import Tolerance (ITs) setting and their potential impacts and shared best practices, strategies for development and implementation of effective MRLs and ITs. In their own words, they shared their expectations, summarized around the need to advance strategies for:

- Exchanging country experiences and knowledge in management of MRLs
- Enhancing capacity building in risk assessment and bringing science back into the MRL discussions
- Harmonising Africa’s position in MRL discussions at international fora (e.g. Codex, CCPR, JMPR and SPS including setting of MRLs within Africa
- Harmonising regulations for registration of pesticides
- Addressing growers’ challenges including those related to minor and speciality crops
- Creating an enabling environment for sustainable production and market access

Topics handled during plenary and panel discussions highlighted the centrality of risk assessment. A description of tests such as NOAEL (No Observed Adverse Effect Level), which is, a determination of the highest exposure level at which no adverse effects can be identified for different test species and a derivation of further toxicological reference values like acceptable daily intake –ADI and acute reference dose – ARfD to assess consumer safety.

In addition, MRLs setting processes in South Africa’s, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Ethiopia and Ivory Coast were discussed, representing a majority of countries within the Africa Middle East region that defer to Codex or comply to those of respective exports destinations. From these experiences and others, participants underscored the benefits of having MRLs in place including: equal playing field for market access and consistency in food quality and safety. Other public sector experiences were presented highlighting the US EPA food safety monitoring program, Egypt's laboratory experiences in residue analysis and the EAC’s harmonisation of guidelines for pesticides residue trials.

MRLs setting process in most African Countries follows the automatic adoption of Codex MRLs. In economies that do not use positive list approach, Codex MRLs or in some case exporting country MRLs are often used.

An estimate of the amount of a specific substance in food or drinking water, that can be ingested daily over a lifetime without appreciable health risk.

South Africa is the only country in Africa that sets its own MRLs, also defers to CODEX.
The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)’s MRLs setting process was discussed as another example of models that countries could learn from. Some of the salient features of the APEC guideline include:

- Create environment for registration of new compounds
- Cooperation between countries for joint data generation and representation in international discussions
- JMPR enhancement and consideration of a permanent expert group instead of expert panel meeting once per year
- Capacity building for farmers on application, post-harvest use and regulatory changes.

On coping with ever changing policies in setting MRLs and ITs, other examples including the EU and China were reviewed. For EU, the need to address market access issues and minimize uncertainties around MRLs as well as enhance regulatory frameworks that protect health while respecting international agreements were underscored. EU’s implementation of the hazard-based approach and case-by-case policy on setting import MRLs has a potential to disrupt trade estimated at over 11.1 Billion Euros for SSA and 4.3 billion Euros for North Africa and Middle East respectively (Bryant Christie, October 2016). The products likely to be affected include; Vegetables, Fruits, Oilseeds, vegetables, oil, Cocoa and coffee among others. China’s establishment of a new IT regulation, yet to be published, also present an opportunity for countries to engage around clarity for market access to avoid potential non-tariff trade issues.

Experiences shared by grower groups including Subtrops, SA, Kenya’s Fresh Produce Consortium and Ivory Coast’s cocoa sector highlighted the challenges around MRLs compliance. On the overall, they shared increased cost of production due to reduced or non-availability of crop protection tools. This in turn results poor fruit quality, reduced yields, inability to export and increase in pest and disease occurrence among others.

Recommendations reached by participants included specific actions on:

- Resolving current limits in international trade owing to policy changes
- Engaging at international fora including Codex, WTO – SPS meetings
- Strengthening the setting of Codex MRLs and its implementation through data generation
- Enhancing harmonization and capacity development

Stella Simiyu Wafukho
Pesticide Residues Meet High Safety Standards

Part of the enjoyment of eating food is knowing that it’s safe. Governments and farmers around the world help ensure the safety of food crops. This includes regulating pesticides and ensuring their responsible use. Traces of pesticides that can remain on food crops at harvest time are called residues. They are strictly regulated.

Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) are a trading standard and a measure of the highest level of a pesticide residue that is legally tolerated in or on food or feed when pesticides are applied correctly. MRLs are set well below safety margins to ascertain foods produced with pesticides are suitable for consumption. MRLs ensure that consumers can trust the safety and quality of the foods they buy. Pesticide residues, if they occur, are so low that people would have to consume amounts humanly impossible to be affected.

Governments around the world monitor pesticide residues by testing samples. For example, the European Food Safety Authority publishes a monitoring report on residues every year. It shows that in the European Union, about half of all samples are free of detectable residue traces. In the remaining half (45%), residues found were within the legal limits (MRLs). Only about 2 percent of items tested exceeded these limits, which still do not pose a safety issue due to their trace amounts and huge safety margins.

Pesticides are applied at all growth stages of crops to protect them against pests. Farmers follow good agricultural practices to ensure that potential residues are below MRLs. It is essential for farmers to comply with MRL requirements in order to sell their crops locally and for export. Moreover, Integrated Pest Management – a holistic approach to sustainable agriculture that includes the responsible use of pesticides – supports minimizing residues.

MRLs as Trading Standards

MRLs, based on residue trials set by regulators, verify if farmers have used pesticides correctly. Demonstrated consumer safety is an indispensable pre-condition for granting MRLs. Traders and importers can trust that the foods they order fulfill safety and quality requirements, thus ensuring trade and marketability of produce. If an MRL is exceeded, it is against the law so the produce cannot be sold and will be destroyed.

There are many different systems for setting MRLs around world, such as in the United States and EU, as well as provided by Codex Alimentarius internationally. In each market, an MRL is set routinely before a pesticide product is registered but not automatically in import markets. If a product is not registered in an import market, the manufacturer must ask regulators of the importing market to set an import tolerance, which ideally should be the MRL in the exporting market.

Until recently, food was mainly produced, sold and consumed locally. Over the last century, the amount of food traded internationally has grown exponentially. MRLs are the cornerstone to trade. A crop is not legally tradeable if it exceeds MRLs. There are no globally harmonized MRLs and this can be a challenge because farmers must comply with MRLs in both exporting and various importing countries. For example, if South African grapes are sent to the European Union, they must comply with both South African and European MRLs. Thus, farmers need to be well informed about MRL requirements of all their markets. They must verify if following label instructions locally will meet an importing country’s residue requirements.

Exporters are typically aware of MRLs around the world as they do not take the risk of their exports not meeting import tolerances because products can be rejected at the border. Pesticide manufacturers, grower organizations and traders advise farmers and monitor closely any changes in MRLs globally.

Assurance of Safety

Consumers need not be concerned about pesticide residues as there is a huge gap between perception and reality. Even if the legal maximum limit for residues is exceeded, it is very unlikely a risk because of the huge safety margins. For example, a person would have to eat 28,000 strawberries in a single day to come close to exceeding the safety limit for this fruit.

Crop safety begins with the crop protection industry, which test products extensively and only submits for their registration when tests and risk assessments meet strict regulatory and safety requirements. Authorities then run independent assessments and concur or not. Monitoring is ongoing in the food chain from growers to supermarkets. Hundreds of thousands of samples worldwide are analysed for residues year after year.

Most residues are on the skins of fruits and vegetables, therefore, peeling largely removes them. Consumers can also take precaution by removing the outer leaves of heads of lettuce and washing unpeeled produce under running water, gently scrubbing and then drying it. Ultimately, consumers should use good handling practices rather than paying attention to “watch lists” regarding pesticide residues on healthy foods like fruits and vegetables.

Dr. Wibke Meyer is manager of regulatory affairs, Crop Protection, CropLife International in Brussels
CropLife Morocco meets with the registration department of the national agency for food safety

At the request of CropLife Morocco a workshop was held between the local industry association members and the personnel of the Division in charge of pesticide registration at the National Food Safety Agency. The meeting took place on Wednesday July 17, 2019 at Vichy Célestins Hotel & SPA in the beautiful city of Bouznika near the capital Rabat. 30 people participated at that Workshop, 10 from the administration department and 20 from CropLife Morocco. The workshop was led by El Houssaini and Akchati respectively CropLife Morocco General Secretary and Head of Department in charge of pesticide registration at ONSSA. The audience was honoured by the presence of Dr. S. Amellal, DG of CropLife AME.

The purpose of the workshop was to address and clarify a certain number of points mentioned in the last registration procedure code which came into force on April 29, 2019, along with the new importation procedure code, which is still under discussion. Following the opening address, Mr. Akchati gave an overview of the organization and the activities of the registration pesticide department which is now also in charge of pesticide importation control.

The debate that followed was useful and fruitful with the following key points agreed on:

- Registration procedures:
  - The registration dossier will be valid for 4 years instead of 3 years
  - The submission date is the starting point
  - A check list form was developed to ensure that the dossier is complete
  - Given the large number of submitted dossiers and the lack of human resources, only completed dossiers will be evaluated and submitted to the registration commission for decision
  - The delay in granting authorization for trials is exceptional this year, this will however be managed
  - To speed up the registration process in the current year, the registration department will organize an exceptional registration committee meeting between September and December 2019.
  - Registration dossiers without an OECD registration certificate will be accepted for evaluation but cannot be granted registration by the committee until the submission of such a certificate.
  - Same position as above for a local brand name registration certificate
  - For international brands, the product name registration certificate must state the region or country.
  - The OECD certificate does not need to be certified for registration, however, for registration renewal this should be certified.
  - Dossiers submitted prior to April 29, 2019 will be evaluated based on the former registration code
  - A meeting will be organized by the administration during the upcoming fourth quarter to discuss with the industry the new repository for the constitution of the registration files.

Import and control procedures:

- The import and control of pesticides for agricultural use, is still based on the last code version B
- The new import and control procedures, code version C, as well as, the reference system for taking samples, will soon be the subject of a meeting between the administration and industry including all stakeholders (regional administration, official Laboratory and companies providing services.)

Training session:

- It was agreed that a training session on counterfeiting will be organized by CropLife AME for the ONSSA regional inspectors, during the fourth quarter 2019.

Boubker El Ouilani
Strengthening the Regulatory Environment to Improve the use of pesticides in Ghana

CropLife Africa Middle East, in cooperation with Ghana EPA-CCMC and PPRSD organized a one-day roundtable discussion on July 25, with key distributors of pesticides in Ghana. The roundtable discussion was organized under the SNV-HortiFresh SSP project aimed at “Improving access to good quality pesticides and the judicious application of these products” in the vegetable sector. CropLife Africa Middle East is implementing the project to set-up a network of 255 SSPs to service more than 4000 vegetable farmers.

The participants comprised of the officers of EPA-CCMC and PPRSD, representatives of SNV-HortiFresh, member companies of CropLife Ghana, other licensed distributors of pesticides and GAIDA. The objective of the discussion was to assess the availability of modern quality pesticides for smallholder vegetable producers, as the use of such products in the vegetable sector is low. Other specific objectives were to sensitize involved parties on the challenges posed by the limited number of pesticides available for the sector and define a process to attract modern quality pesticides through registration and supply of such pesticides by the industry.

The discussions led to a better understanding of the present unsatisfactory situation and the underlying reasons for this. A list of actions was considered for needed changes towards a more enabling regulatory environment and supply strategy including an appropriate packaging range.

Participants committed to seriously consider the proposed actions for improvement of the situation. It is expected that such actions will contribute to increasing the list of available quality pesticides, and in so doing allow for easier access and the widening of choice for approved pesticides for the vegetable sector. Moreover, stewardship activities will be coupled to this, and the presence and use of counterfeit and other illegal pesticides will be greatly reduced. In all, the implementation of these actions will contribute to improving the production and quality of vegetables in Ghana, provide access to export markets and improving the income and livelihoods of the vegetable producers.

Stella Simiyu Wafukho & Bama Yao

Stella Simiyu Wafukho  (Below) and Fred Boampong  (Above) CropLife Ghana providing guidance and inputs for the group work
Dr Sam Adu-Kumi, Director Ghana EPA-CCMC (Above) addressing the participants (Below) on the challenges of pesticides management in Ghana
CropLife Ghana conducts anticounterfeiting training workshop for farmers

CropLife Ghana organized training workshops aimed at sensitizing vegetable and maize farmers on counterfeit and other illegal products, as well as on the responsible use of pesticides.

The workshops attracted more than 200 farmers in Amasaman on June 19, and on July 10, in Battor in the Greater Accra and Volta regions, respectively.

The workshops addressed the health and economic risks associated with the use of counterfeit pesticides and the importance for farmers to avoid purchasing and using such products. The groups were encouraged to purchase pesticides from only accredited stockists and not from trucks and vans during market days. They were sensitized to look for the logos of CropLife Ghana member companies to ensure the use of approved and registered quality products.

Other topics detailed were related to reading the label and checking the pre-harvest intervals before applying pesticides. The use of appropriate PPE when handling pesticides and the triple rinsing and puncturing of the empty containers were also thoroughly covered.

Fred Boampong
Anti-Counterfeiting Activities

US Government supports the fight against counterfeit pesticides in Africa

The U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) International Computer Hacking and Intellectual Property Attorney Advisor (ICHIP) for Africa, Tanya Hill based in Nigeria, in coordination with USDOJ Computer Crimes and Intellectual Property Section (CCIPS), the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), and the US Embassy in Dakar, held a four-day regional workshop in Dakar, Senegal, on June 11-14. The objective was to build enforcement capacity and improve regional cooperation in fighting pharmaceutical-based crime and address illicit pesticides in West and Central Africa. The 58 participants comprised of prosecutors, customs officials, law enforcement, and health sector regulators from Burundi, Chad, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Mali, Guinea, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, and Senegal participated in the program. Among the presenters were customs officials from the World Customs Organization, prosecutors from CCIPS, and private industry representatives.

U.S. Ambassador to Senegal, Tulinabo Mushingi began the workshop by detailing the importance of securing property rights within Africa to support the U.S. three pillar strategy including enhanced trade and cooperation on health and safety matters as part of the U.S. relationship with Africa. Senegal’s Justice Ministry Cabinet Chief also gave opening remarks, mentioning within certain African countries, seven out of ten medicines are counterfeit. The workshop consisted of informational presentations, panel discussions, and practical exercises. Discussions focused, for example, on the many thousands of containers that arrive at ports in the region annually as well as the harm of counterfeit medications on health and safety in West Africa.

Country representatives further detailed major challenges in property rights implementation and enforcement within their countries. Trending challenges included lack of or weak border security, insufficient law enforcement resources, and the influx of Chinese counterfeit drugs and illicit pesticides in the supply chain used by West and Central African farmers. Representatives from the USDOJ and US Homeland Security Investigations lectured on best practices for prosecuting crimes involving illicit pharmaceuticals and pesticides and intellectual property and health and safety offenses. The workshop established relationships for West and Central African collaborative efforts against the illicit sales of counterfeit goods in the future.

Tanya and Bisi, USDOJ and JoEllen, USPTO

Above: Participants comprising of prosecutors, customs officials, law enforcement bodies, the health sector and pesticide regulators from 11 francophone countries

Tanya Hill and Bisi Olabanji (2nd and 4th, L-R, respectively) of USDOJ-ICHIP, key organizers of the workshop pictured with the U.S. Ambassador Mushingi (Center) to Senegal

Photo Courtesy: Organizers
Creation of a new CropLife South Africa Forum: “Complementary Products Forum”

As background, with the changing dynamics in crop protection, a meeting took place at the CropLife South Africa offices.

CropLife SA has been approached by several member companies looking for guidance as to how to register and introduce new technologies onto the South African plant protection market.

These new technologies are often of a nature that they are not considered as traditional plant protection products (e.g. non-chemical solutions) so there are currently no guidance documents available for people to refer to.

Additionally, these new technologies are targeting different segments of our industry where new guidance is required (e.g. plant protection products for use in organic food production).

The rationale for the creation of the new forum is that most spray programs these days include several non-chemical products / non-traditional plant protection products that complement traditional plant protection chemistry, with many of these products already being supplied by CropLife SA members.

In summary, members of CropLife SA supplying substances that are targeting organic agriculture, suppliers with new technologies and suppliers of non-chemical plant protection solutions are also looking for a voice and guidance from CropLife SA.

It was stressed that the CropLife SA Executive Committee had approved the creation of a Complementary Products Forum with the condition that a founding meeting be held to identify the aims and functions of such a forum. It was further stressed that CropLife SA has absolutely no intention of encroaching on the mandate of other associations such as SABO (Biopesticides Assoc). & FERTASA (Fertilizer Assoc), but would like to be able to guide their members on which route to follow with their new technologies.

Examples of questions that need to be addressed in order to identify correctly where these new technologies will ‘live’ within our industry are:

- When does a product registered as a Group 3 plant nutrition product become a plant protection product and require a registration under Act 36/1947?
- How does one apply for data waivers for products targeting organic food production; the same route as for traditional plant protection products?
- How does an MRL get established for a non-traditional plant protection solution?
- When does a new technology get addressed by CLSA and when should this be handled by other associations (such as South African Bioproducts Organisation)?
- In conclusion, all member companies involved with the development, registration and sale of plant protection solutions that are not currently covered by existing registration guidelines or are not represented by other CropLife SA forums or working groups, were given the opportunity to comment and provide inputs for this to be taken back to ExCo for further consultation.

Les Hillowitz
Mozambique to Gain from Using GM Maize, Research Reveals

The use of genetically modified (GM) maize could increase crop yield by up to 50 percent, according to a study conducted by the Mozambique Agricultural Research Institute (IIAM). Maize is considered to be one of the most important crops in the country.

Pedro Fato, lead researcher at IIAM, reported that the GM seeds have great potential for producing drought tolerant and pest resistant maize. The first phase of tests showed that GM maize had doubled yield under conditions of drought compared to normal maize. When exposed to the same pests, the GM maize also performed better than the unmodified maize, producing 10 to 12 percent more yield. The tests were held over two years under contained environments.

The second phase will be conducted in open conditions, which will be the first time that the country will use GM seeds for maize production. Celso Laice, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Science and Technology, spoke about the government's support and assured the public of the seeds' safety. According to Laice, the Ministry was involved in all phases of the study with the task of "ensuring that activities involving GMOs are undertaken in a safe and responsible manner."

Fato further confirmed that there are plans to develop the GM seeds on a national scale. "When the seed becomes available, any producer can have access to it, and produce genetically modified maize in any corner of the country," he stated.

ISAAA
Government Spokespersons Impressed by Progress in Agri-biotech Research in Uganda

Over 60 spokespersons from various government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) were excited by the scale of progress made in agricultural research in Uganda. The spokespersons attended an engagement organized by National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) through its information-sharing hub, the Uganda Biosciences Information Center (UBIC), at the National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRRI) at Namulonge on July 10, 2019.

The objectives of the activity were to update them on the contribution of NARO's research to national development; empower them to become champions for agricultural research for Uganda; and explore collaboration and partnerships in information sharing and obtaining feedback for agricultural and national development.

After touring the biotechnology laboratories at NaCRRRI, Hellen Kaweesa, the Parliament spokesperson, wondered why all the progress made in agricultural biotechnology research in Uganda has not yet convinced the "responsible persons" to enact the relevant biosafety law. "Are the scientists hiding something from us," she wondered. In response to her concern, Dr. Barbara Mugwanya Zawedde, the coordinator of UBIC, emphasized that such concerns can be addressed by having a functional biosafety system, supported by a relevant legislation, which looks at each technology and/or product on a case-by-case.

Speaking after the engagement, Peter Kauju spokesperson for Kampala Capital City Authority said, "In the quiet precincts of Namulonge, Wakiso District near Kampala City, you find great people on a great mission to transform our agriculture. Many ground-breaking innovations in crop resources, livestock health, aquaculture and genetic engineering among others. Great job NARO Uganda!" NARO continues to use appropriate modern biosciences to address challenges, and add value, to a variety of crops and animals of strategic national importance in Uganda. The Government spokespersons requested that NARO creates a glossary and FAQs on agricultural biotechnology, and have these widely disseminated during various fora and on online platforms to facilitate sensitization efforts on such technologies.
Kenyan Clergy Supports Bt Cotton Cultivation

Kenya's bid to commercialize Bt cotton has received a major boost after a section of religious leaders in the country endorsed the GM crop.

Speaking on July 18, 2019 during a farm visit to cotton farmers in central Kenya, the clerics endorsed cultivation of Bt cotton saying it will improve smallholder farmers livelihoods who bear the brunt of huge losses every season due to the African bollworm infestation. Having to spray up to 15 times per season, farmers who rely on cotton for subsistence are now on the verge of abandoning cotton farming entirely. "My present harvest will barely cover half of the cost I have incurred this season," lamented Julius Njeru, a 72-year-old farmer whose family's livelihood has relied on cotton farming since 1968. After witnessing farmers' growing adversity, the clerics visited a Bt cotton National Performance Trial (NPT) site in the region.

A stark difference in performance and yield between Bt cotton and conventional varieties was evident, providing a ray of hope for the farmers. "We must make beneficial technologies available to our farmers while ensuring that all safety and regulatory conditions are met," said Stephen Kituku, National Director of Caritas, the Development and Humanitarian arm of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB). Bt cotton has been improved with resistance to the African bollworm, reducing the need for pesticide spraying from 12 to 3 times per cropping season.

The highly anticipated commercialization of Bt cotton in Kenya will not only increase farmers' profits but also create thousands of jobs for youth and boost the manufacturing sector as envisioned by the Kenyan government's Big Four Agenda.
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