

Community Pesticide Action Monitoring: Applying the Precautionary Approach

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Community Pesticide Action Monitoring (CPAM)

- Community-based monitoring of pesticide impacts
- Based on participatory action research
- Tool to document and create awareness of pesticide impacts on human health and the environment.
- Self-surveillance and organising for action.

Key Elements of Precaution in CPAM

- Community participatory action research in addressing uncertainty
- Starting premise is “no acceptable level of exposure” (elimination),
- The burden of proof (of safety) is put on the polluter
- Preventive action

Key Elements of Precaution in CPAM

- A need-based approach
- All relevant information is not confidential and must be made available
- The safety and welfare of the community is the focus of importance

Main Objectives in the CPAM Approach

- **Protect health**
- **Protect the environment**
- **Prevent any potential adverse effect**

Collective Wisdom of the Community

CPAM relies on the collective wisdom of the community in determining whether or not the chemicals they would be exposed to (or are already exposed to without their consent) pose hazards to their health and their environment.










The Paraquat Example in Malaysia

- Malaysian plantation workers were organized, documented the health effects of the sprayed pesticides on their health, and through this process, identified paraquat as a major problem.
- They did this through their own system of observation and evaluation of risks developed mainly through the CPAM approach, which includes community organizing, education and empowerment.

TH RECORD

I.D. No. : _____

Sex _____ Address: _____

No.	Symptoms	Date						
1	Nausea 							
2	Vomiting 							
3	Dizziness 							
4	Headache 							
5	Nosebleed 							
6	Difficulty of breathing 							
7	Tightness of chest 							
8	Backache 							
9	Tremors 							





The Paraquat Example in Malaysia

- Using the principle of precaution, the plantation workers and their support groups, including PANAP, proceeded to take action to prevent further exposure of plantation workers to paraquat.

The Paraquat Example in Malaysia

- This led to a campaign of the plantation workers together with regional and local groups, calling for a safer working environment and justice.
- In 2002, the Malaysian Pesticide Control Division banned paraquat with a phase-out period of two years.

Endosulfan Example in Kerala, India

Communities in Kasargod District, Kerala (India) clearly identified endosulfan as the pesticide causing health and environmental problems after documenting, monitoring and investigating using a CPAM approach with the help of PANAP and other groups.







Endosulfan Example in Kerala, India

Previous studies undertaken by the private entities commissioned by the industry did not find any connection between endosulfan exposure and the illnesses observed in the community and a government scientific body was reluctant in making any conclusion as to the adverse effects of endosulfan because of many uncertainties.

Endosulfan Example in Kerala, India

The community groups, together with the support of NGOs, both locally and internationally, concluded that endosulfan was the primary cause of the health and environmental problems in the communities and called for banning of endosulfan to prevent further exposure and damage to the communities.

Endosulfan Example in Kerala, India

- A ban on aerial spraying of endosulfan in the state was eventually obtained through court action.
- It is noteworthy that the court in this case invoked the “precautionary principle” in ruling in favour of the petitioners (affected communities).

The Court Ruling

“...we have reached the conclusion that between the two alternatives, we must err on the safer side and choose the alternative which has less dangerous implications...

We have, therefore, decided to choose the lesser evil and, purely as a precautionary measure, to impose a temporary ban on the use of ENDOSULFAN...”

Concluding Remarks

Using CPAM, the communities considered “lack of evidence” as no evidence of absence (of harm), realizing that uncertainty factors often preclude definitive demonstration of cause and effect relationships.

Concluding Remarks

CPAM actively seeks to address the knowledge gaps, employing scientific and empirical methods, using self-monitoring tools, seeking help of experts from the academe and public interest NGOs

Concluding Remarks

- CPAM approach focuses on alternatives to chemicals, demonstrating that the perceived “need” for the chemicals is illusory
- An integrated, ecological approach to plant, soil and pest management would be the better option for a sustainable crop production that would not endanger health and the environment

Concluding Remarks

- The only way to prevent harm from pesticides is to not to use them by practising sustainable, ecological way of farming.
- Practising sustainable agriculture is the ultimate application of the precautionary principle at the farmers level.