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**North American nations cooperate on the phase-out of seven persistent organic pollutants under CEC's Sound Management of Chemicals initiative**

Progress made as a result of cooperative efforts by Canada, Mexico and the United States in implementing *North American Regional Action Plans* for the persistent organic pollutants **DDT, chlordane** and **PCBs** has helped to advance their national timetables for meeting their respective global and binational commitments to the sound management of chemicals. Actions taken as a result of the chlordane and DDT action plans have also had benefits that extend to other nations. The action plans are developed as part of the Sound Management of Chemicals program of the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC).

Trilateral cooperation for the sound management of chemicals has been an important area of activity for the CEC since the approval on 13 October 1995 of *Resolution 95-05 for the Sound Management of Chemicals* by the commission's governing Council, which is composed of cabinet-level or equivalent representatives. The CEC was itself established under the 1994 North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC). The Agreement, established parallel to the NAFTA, provides for environmental cooperation between the three North American nations.

The link between the NAAEC and global initiatives is noted through the Resolution's affirmation to principles of the 1992 Rio Declaration and recommendations of the Inter-governmental Forum on Chemical Safety. Annex 1 of the Resolution lists the persistent organic pollutants identified in the May 1995 Governing Council Decision 18/32 of the United Nations Environment Programme. As well, three of the first four North American regional action plans developed and now being implemented by the CEC address persistent organic pollutants (POPs), while a fourth action plan on **dioxins and furans and hexachlorobenzene** slated for development in 2000-2001 will address three of the remaining nine substances on the United Nations Environment Programme's list of POPs. (Five of the other six substances on the UNEP "dirty dozen" list—aldren, dieldrin, endrin, mirex and toxaphene—are no longer registered for use in North America, and heptachlor is no longer produced.)

(More)

The first POPs for which North American Regional Action Plans or NARAPs were developed under the Resolution—**DDT, chlordane and PCBs**—are in keeping with the priority that the Resolution gives to the management and control of substances of mutual concern that are persistent and toxic. PCBs were identified for North American action within the Resolution. In January 1996 the North American Working Group for the Sound Management of Chemicals, established by the CEC Council to implement the decisions and commitments set forth in the Resolution, determined that an additional two of the 12 persistent organic pollutants or POPs on the UNEP list would be the subject of North American Regional Action Plans (NARAP). The action plans for the three POPs were approved by the Council by October 1997, together with the first phase of a two-phase mercury regional action plan. The Council approved development of the North American Action Plan on dioxins and furans and hexachlorobenzene in 1999. Two additional substances—lindane, also a POP, and lead—are now being evaluated for potential trilateral action, whether development of a North American action plan or other joint activity, under the CEC's *Process for Identifying Candidate Substances under the Sound Management of Chemicals*.

### **North American action on persistent organic pollutants**

Mexico's role in implementation of the NARAPs on chlordane and DDT has been recognized within North America as a central one, with the role of Canada and the United States under the CEC Sound Management of Chemicals program being primarily one of support expressed through sharing of technical expertise and assisting with capacity-building efforts. The CEC has also played a key role in locating additional funding applied to implementation activities of the North American Action Plan on DDT that are ongoing in nature.

#### North American Regional Action Plan on DDT

Elimination of DDT use for malarial control in Mexico is an overarching objective of the action plan with an interim objective being to achieve an 80% reduction in the use of DDT by 2002. Mexico is ahead of this reduction schedule. In 1996 a total of 650 tonnes of DDT were used for malaria whereas in the current calendar year Mexico has not found it necessary to use any DDT in its malaria control programme.

Actions aimed at building Mexico's capacity to implement its integrated pest management approach to malarial control include the following:

- In 1997/1998, Mexico assessed the use of deltamethrin and other pyrethroid alternatives that have low acute toxicity, as an alternative to DDT. The field assessments were undertaken utilizing CEC funds for capacity-building. As a result of Mexico is now using the alternatives.
- Workshops held in 1998 and 1999 and co-sponsored by the CEC focused on alternative control methods; rapid malaria diagnosis and treatment; environmental and health effects of chemical alternatives to DDT; and determinants involved in malaria transmission. As a result of these workshops and other efforts Mexico's integrated pest management approach to malarial control focuses on the disease first.

Management of mosquito vectors is taken in conjunction with disease control. Alternative pesticides are applied according to outbreaks and location of the disease and weather conditions. Municipalities have greater authority in determining application needs. The result: fewer pounds of pesticides are used and used more effectively.

- Mexico's research on human health and environmental effects of DDT and alternatives and information sharing on outcomes of its integrated pest management continues in partnership with other Central America nations with funding provided by the Global Environmental Facility and the International Development Research Centre. Thus, the actions of the NARAP on DDT are leading to results that extend beyond North America.

#### North American Regional Action Plan on Chlordane

This plan has been successfully implemented.

Its goal is to reduce exposure of humans and the environment to chlordane by phasing out existing registered uses by 1998 and, through the joint efforts of the three countries, to identify an effective control strategy for termites in Mexico. (Use of chlordane within the United States and Canada were terminated in 1995.)

Actions taken to implement the plan include the following:

- Mexico's 1997 prohibition on sales of the active ingredient used for formulating chlordane. In 1998, Mexico formally notified the United States manufacturer of its decision. The one Mexican company that formulated chlordane using the imported active ingredient has now depleted its stocks and Mexico has instituted a hazardous waste collection program for chlordane.
- The decision by the sole manufacturer of the active ingredient for chlordane in 1998 to voluntarily cease all production of chlordane at its United States facility.

The NARAP on Chlordane, as a result of the cessation of chlordane production and Mexico's experiences in integrated pest management clearly have benefits that extend beyond North America.

#### North American Regional Action Plan on PCBs

The main objectives of this plan are to (1) work toward the virtual elimination of PCBs in the environment, which is interpreted as no measurable releases; and the phase out of uses for which release cannot be contained; and (2) propose environmentally sound management and control of existing PCBs, throughout their life cycles.

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