

PESTICIDE POISONING IN SRI LANKA

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Statistics reveal that about 1,000 workers are poisoned each year from poisonous chemicals in Sri Lanka. A survey in 1983 showed that out of 407 pesticide poisonings, 373 were suicidal and 29 were from occupational exposure.

In Sri Lanka, about 10,000 workers are exposed to pesticides in antimalaria and antifilaria operations. A study revealed that workers spraying Fenthion for filariasis control frequently suffered from pesticide poisoning.

Such cases of poisoning happen because of the way pesticides are

Every year pesticides kill nearly 2,000 people in Sri Lanka. Deaths from pesticide poisoning can be the most agonising and painful.

Pesticides are safe if used correctly and stored properly. Misuse can lead to accidental poisoning of family members especially children, workers and animals.

distributed in this country. Distributors who trade in pesticides also sell items like cigarettes, flour, oil and even baby food. Therefore, it is not surprising that mass food poisoning cases have occurred.

Most occupational poisonings in Sri Lanka seem to affect cultivators of rice and vegetables, and it is

among the mass of poor farmers that pesticides take their toll.

Pesticides and the Environment

Improper use of pesticides may be unprofitable, ineffective or even counter productive at least in the long run, if not immediately. The pests natural enemies are killed by the pesticide and the pests themselves may develop the ability to resist the action of the chemicals, as was the case with DDT. Thus a kind of addiction can set in, where the farmer finds that he must apply more and more powerful insecticides, to prevent devastating crop losses. So, a "pesticide treadmill" is created. Pesticides like Chordane, Endrin and Hepatachl are very toxic to earthworms who play an important part in circulating and aerating the soil.

In the ecosystem, through the food chain, pesticides often bioaccumulate due to their water insolubility and fat solubility, especially in the case of Organochlorines. So when these are ingested directly, or when it is a part of another animal or plant, this goes up the food chain. Studies have shown that birds of prey and other organisms high in this food chain have concentrations of DDT ten million times greater than those in the water or air environment. Pollination and the reproductive processes of birds and other animals are also affected as a result of this bio accumulation.

Pesticides washed into rivers get rapidly absorbed by sedimentation, and the aquatic species therein. In small concentrations, pesticides are fatal to the fish.

It is obvious that careful control and use of pesticides is essential to avoid all kinds of hazards to animals and even to human life, thus ensuring maximum benefits.?