

# **Reducing and Eliminating the use of Persistent Organic Pesticides**

*Guidance on  
alternative strategies for sustainable pest  
and vector management*

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Fold-out flowchart on the backflap



# Preface

Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) are chemicals that persist in the environment, accumulate in high concentrations in fatty tissues and are bio-magnified through the food-chain. Hence they constitute a serious environmental hazard that comes to expression as important long-term risks to individual species, to ecosystems and to human health. POPs chemicals may cause cancer and disorders in the reproductive and immune systems as well as in the developmental process. They constitute a particular risk to infants and children who may be exposed to high levels through breast-milk and food.

During the last two decades much attention has been given to this group of substances at the international level after it became apparent that they are transported through the environment across borders. Individual countries alone are unable to control the environmental pollution from such border-crossing substances and critical concentrations have been reached in some regions, even in places where they have never been produced or used. Negotiations on a global, legally binding instrument to reduce and/or eliminate releases of POPs started in Montreal, Canada in 1998 under the auspices of UNEP. In May 2001 126 countries and the EU agreed and adopted the text of this global treaty, referred to as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

The decision by the UNEP Governing Council in 1997 to initiate these negotiations followed recommendations by the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) for international actions to reduce the risks to human health and the environment arising from a first list of twelve POPs. The IFCS recommendations were also endorsed by the World Health Assembly (WHA) in May 1997. Through the adoption of Resolution 50.13 (promotion of chemical safety, with special attention to persistent organic pollutants) the Assembly requested the Director-General of the World Health Organization, *inter alia*, to continue efforts to enhance technical cooperation with Member States for the determination of their capacity-building needs, and for the implementation of programmes for the management of chemical risks, in collaboration with participants of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) and other organizations.

In 1997 the Governing Council further requested UNEP to initiate a number of immediate actions including the improvement of access to information and expertise on alternatives to POPs. Information exchange and education programmes should enable governments of Member States to make their own decisions on replacing POPs with alternatives. In this context UNEP was requested to develop guidance on the selection of alternatives to POPs pesticides.

In response to these requests, this guidance document has been prepared jointly by the United Nations Environment Programme (through its Chemicals unit), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (through the Global IPM Facility) and the World Health Organization (through the Secretariat of the Panel of Experts on Environmental Management for Vector Control - PEEM). It is a guide for the onset of national efforts to assess, select and develop alternative strategies to POPs pesticides in line with the basic principles for more sustainable practices in pest and vector control. It takes into account various aspects of public health, the environment and agriculture with the objective of fostering holistic and integrated approaches while ensuring that strategies of different sectors are compatible, co-

ordinated and mutually reinforcing. Implementation of such strategies will also be promoted through regional training workshops, pilot studies and support to develop and implement national action plans.

This document is part of a package of UNEP products aimed to facilitate and support the development of initiatives at all levels to reduce and/or eliminate releases of POPs. These products are all available through the POPs homepage at <http://www.chem.unep.ch/pops/>. Drafts of this document were reviewed by a large number of experts both from within and outside of the three UN agencies, whose valuable and constructive comments and contributions to both contents and structure of the draft text are gratefully acknowledged. Special thanks are extended to Johan Mörner, who produced the first draft manuscript, and to Barbara Dinham, Hermann Waibel and Peter Kenmore who provided substantial inputs into the document. Robert Bos (WHO), Marjon Fredrix (FAO) and Agneta Sundén Byléhn (UNEP) were responsible for its final development and editing.