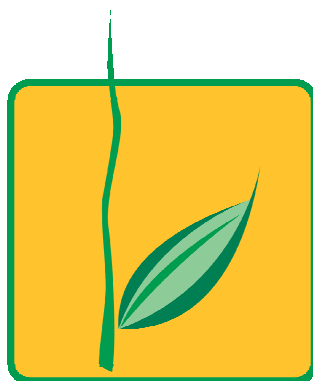


COUNTERFEIT PESTICIDES IN GREECE

**The current situation and industry activities to
fight counterfeits.**



HCPA
HELLENIC CROP
PROTECTION
ASSOCIATION

Hellenic Crop Protection Association
www.esyf.gr

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Anti-Counterfeit Project in Greece

INTRODUCTION

During the past few years, Greece, like most other countries, has faced the problem of counterfeit/ illegal Plant Protection Products (PPPs) or, as they are often called, pesticides. Counterfeit and illegal pesticides are more prevalent in northern Greece, in part because illegal pesticides are imported into the country predominately through Greece's northern borders. There is significant evidence that illegal pesticides are also used in certain areas of central and southern Greece. The Hellenic Crop Protection Association (HCPA) has registered at least 20 complaints about the issue, and this probably represents just the tip of a larger problem. Consequently, HCPA identified the need to prepare and run a communications programme and campaign. This resulted in the initiative to carry out the Anti-Counterfeit project in Greece.

GOALS OF THE ANTI-COUNTERFEIT PROJECT

The Anti-Counterfeit Project in Greece commenced in April 2007. The primary aim of the project is to inform and educate all groups involved in pesticide commerce, including the final users of the products - farmers. The issues of focus for activity are: illegal imports of pesticides, the Greece legislation regarding pesticides and the consequences of illegal use and trading of these products for farmers' and consumers' health, crops and environment. Secondary project goals are:

1. Mapping of the counterfeit and illegal pesticide situation
2. Informing of key stakeholders and other interested parties
3. Raising public awareness
4. Active involvement of authorities

INFORMATION AND INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

In order to achieve all the above goals, HCPA carried out the activities in 11 prefectures of northern and central areas of Greece, where the following audiences were approached:

- Stores selling pesticides (dealers-distributors) in each Prefecture
- Farm Cooperatives
- Agronomists' Associations
- Departments of Ministry of Rural Development and Food in each Prefecture
- Customs at the borders of Greece-Turkey, Greece-FYROM and in the ports of Thessaloniki and Piraeus
- Police departments in Greek areas next to Bulgaria

Many presentations and briefings took place in stores selling pesticides and farm Co-ops, informing agronomists (owners of the stores) and farmers. Departments of Rural Development & Food and Agronomists' Associations were approached in order to be informed on the project as well as to be asked to participate or even to co-organize conferences with HCPA regarding the issue. During briefings in all cases, informative booklets were provided to participants and posters were distributed in order to be put up for public information. Through frequent and repeated personal contacts with the above-mentioned audiences in each Prefecture, HCPA managed to gather plenty of information, to detect the points of entrance of illegal pesticides, to evaluate the extent of the problem in each district and finally proceed with the mapping of the situation.

MAPPING OF THE SITUATION - ACHIEVEMENTS

Prefecture of Thessaloniki

The problem of illegal pesticides in the Prefecture is located Thessaloniki plain, where the basic crop is rice. During the last three years, illegal rice herbicides (containing the active ingredients: pretilachlor, penoxsulam, bispyribac-sodium, profoxydim) have been imported (mainly from Italy and Turkey) and have been used in this area. These herbicides are illegal either because they are imported without following required parallel trade rules or because they are not registered in Greece. The labels of these illegal pesticides are written in Italian or Turkish, so it is extremely difficult for Greek farmers to read them. Locals estimate that over 8,000ha of crop rice were sprayed with illegal herbicides during the summer of 2007; approximately 35% of the total rice cultivated area in the plain of Thessaloniki.

This problem was brought up and discussed in the district council of Thessaloniki at 21/6/2007 with the participation of the Agronomists' Association of Macedonia and Thrace. The event received wide publicity in both national and provincial press.

Prefecture of Chalkidiki

The Prefecture of Chalkidiki has faced the problem of illegal use of insecticide products (containing the active ingredient monocrotophos) during the last 4 years. These products have already been withdrawn in the EU. Local sources reported to HCPA that these insecticides are imported from Turkey or Bulgaria even without labels. It was estimated, nevertheless, that the quantity of these illegal insecticides sprayed to olive trees during the summer of 2007 was limited, compared to former years.

Sources also mentioned a problem of illegal imports and use of other insecticide products (containing the active ingredient abamectin). These illegal pesticides have been imported mainly from Spain and Bulgaria (the labels are written in Spanish or Bulgarian) and have been used in other districts of northern and central Greece as well.

After several personal contacts with people from the Department of Rural Development & Food in Chalkidiki, the Department dispatched a warning letter regarding both the issue and the strict penalties that will be imposed after inspections. This letter was heavily publicized in the provincial press.

Prefectures of Imathia and Pella

There are a lot of similarities between the two prefectures of Imathia and Pella, both in terms of the crops cultivated, as well as the illegal pesticides used by farmers. The main problem of use of illegal pesticides is located in the plain between the towns of Alexandria and Giannitsa. According to local sources, the major issue is the import of insecticide products (containing the active ingredient: abamectin) from Bulgaria, Spain and FYROM. These insecticides are applied on fruit trees and cotton, and it was estimated that 10,000ha of cotton were sprayed with these illegal products during the summer of 2007. Another problem that was detected in certain areas where kiwi fruits are cultivated, is the illegal use of the plant growth regulator products (active ingredient: forchlorfenuron), which are mainly imported from Italy. This product is not registered in Greece and in this case again, all these illegal products were sold with labels in other languages, but not Greek.

Prefecture of Kilkis

The problem in the prefecture of Kilkis is the illegal import and use of various wheat herbicide products (containing active ingredients: clodinafop-propargyl, mesosulfuron-methyl, iodosulfuron-methyl-sodium, fenoxaprop-P-ethyl, chlorsulfuron, tribenuron-methyl, thifensulfuron-metyl), which are imported mainly from Bulgaria and FYROM. These products had already been used on the crops, during early spring, before the beginning of the Anti-Counterfeit Project. Local sources estimate that these illegal pesticides are imported in large quantities and that the problem has increased during the last 3 years.

Prefecture of Serres

The prefecture of Serres, which borders Bulgaria, faces the problem of illegal imports and use of various pesticides from Bulgaria. Local sources reported imports of corn herbicides (active ingredients: isoxaflutole, rimsulfuron, nicosulfuron), of wheat herbicides (a.i.: chlorsulfuron, mesosulfuron-methyl, iodosulfuron-methyl-sodium, tribenuron-methyl, thifensulfuron-methyl), of other various herbicides (a.i.: fluazifop-P-butyl, glyphosate) and of various insecticides (active ingredients fipronil, bifenthrin). All these illegal pesticides are smuggled with labels in Bulgarian or even in offhand packaging (e.g. water or refreshment bottles), and some of them (e.g. fipronil) are not registered for agricultural use in Greece. Moreover, locals mentioned that it is rumoured that there is trafficking of empty - already used in Greece - packaging of pesticides to Bulgaria so that they are refilled and used again.

After briefings with the Police Departments, the police officers became more sensitive to the issue and during controls they carried out, at the borders of Greece-Bulgaria, 2 or 3 cases were reported in which people were arrested for importing illegal pesticides. Fines (1000€) were imposed by the Ministry of Rural Development & Food. HCPA took the initiative to hold several meetings with key people from the Department of Rural Development & Food and from the Agronomists' Association of Serres. As a result of these meetings there was conference co-organized in the city of Serres in January 2008. The participants were mainly farmers and agronomists from northern Greece. During this event, presentations were made by HCPA and also by a representative from the Ministry of Rural Development & Food regarding both the legislation on pesticides and illegal use. This conference was widely publicized in the provincial press and TV.

Prefecture of Drama

Like in Serres, the problem of import of illegal pesticides from Bulgaria is the main problem in the prefecture of Drama. New allies from the Department of Rural Development & Food in Drama were identified during HCPA's Anti-Counterfeit campaign. This led people from the Department of Rural Development & Food to organize a conference on mid-2007 in the town of Kato Nevrokopi (a significant potato producer town near Bulgaria). HCPA participated in this event with a presentation on illegal pesticides and distribution of informative booklets.

Prefecture of Rodopi

The Prefecture of Rodopi and particularly the eastern part of it, has faced the problem of imports of illegal pesticides from Turkey during the last 4 years. Local sources reported to HCPA that the illegal products imported and used are various herbicides (active ingredients: quizalofop-p-ethyl, trifluralin, chlorsulfuron, clodinafop-propargyl, mesosulfuron-methyl, iodosulfuron-methyl-sodium, glyphosate), insecticides (a.i.: imidacloprid, methamidophos) and plant growth regulators (a.i.: mepiquat chloride). The labels of the above illegal products are in Turkish, making the effective and safe use of them almost impossible.

Prefecture of Evros

The northern part of Evros faces mainly the problem of illegal pesticides imported from Bulgaria, while in the southern part the use of illegal pesticides imported from Turkey has been observed. Local sources reported that some quantities of Turkish pesticides are imported to Evros from Bulgaria, because at this gateway the controls are less thorough. There is a variety of herbicide (active ingredients: tribenuron-methyl, thifensulfuron-methyl, chlorsulfuron, mesosulfuron-methyl, iodosulfuron-methyl-sodium, isoxaflutole, rimsulfuron, clodinafop-propargyl, quizalofop-p-ethyl, s-metolachlor, fluazifop-P-butyl and glyphosate), insecticide (a.i.: imidacloprid, propargite) and fungicide products (a.i.: metalaxyl-M, mancozeb) that are illegally imported from both countries.

Ever since the commencement of HCPA's Anti-Counterfeit campaign, the customs inspectors became more sensitive regarding the issue, thus the custom of Kipous tightened the controls and on 12/2/2008 reported the confiscation and destruction of 100Kg of illegal Turkish pesticides, which a truck driver tried to import from Turkey.

Prefecture of Pieria

According to local sources, the only problem in the prefecture of Pieria is the illegal use of the plant growth regulator product (a.i.: forchlorfenuron) on kiwi fruits. This product is brought to the area from Italy and it is illegal because it has not yet been registered in Greece. Finally, locals mentioned that the quantities of this product - which were sprayed during the spring of 2007- were limited but there is a fear that this problem could become far more intense in the next years.

Prefecture of Larisa

The main problem was faced in two areas of the prefecture has been the use of an illegal insecticide (active ingredient: abamectin) on fruit trees and cotton. These insecticides are illegally imported from Spain, Italy and Bulgaria and are sold to farmers with labels in foreign languages. Local sources consider this to be a serious problem for the last 3 years and estimate that the imported quantities of illegal insecticides have been really large. Another issue in the prefecture of Larisa is the illegal use of antibiotic products (active ingredient: streptomycin) on pears. According to information provided by locals, such products are imported illegally from Poland in offhand bags. Other streptomycin products are bought for veterinary purposes but they end up being illegally sprayed on crops.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview the Anti-Counterfeit Project carried out in Greece by HCPA and to provide some feedback on the mapping and activities that have taken place. As described in the above pages and based on extensive intelligence gathering, the **sheer size of the problem of illegal pesticides is alarmingly large in some areas**. The driving force behind this project is not merely financial. The pesticide industry considers public health (of both farmers and consumers), environmental protection, as well as the credibility of Greek agricultural products important drivers. We believe that it is essential for consistent educational programmes to be run in agricultural areas of Greece, but far and foremost for all stakeholders to take the necessary actions that would lead to the minimization of this growing problem.

PICTURES APPENDIX

Bellow is a small sample of pictures showing used illegal pesticides found dumped in the fields in several northern and central districts of Greece.

