Developing Countries Farm Radio Network

Pack 10, Item 11

Type: Script

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**Pesticide safety, part 2: Preparing and applying pesticides**

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Information on this topic was requested by DCFRN Participants in Chile, Colombia, Dominica, Ecuador, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Liberia, Mexico, Paraguay, Philippines, St. Lucia, and Sri Lanka.

Presenter: George Atkins

**Special notes**

1. Before using the information in this item, please read the notes at the end concerning related DCFRN items.

2. This item and Item 10 give important general guidelines to be followed when working with pesticides. Please note that pesticide containers, labels, etc., should be consulted for more specific advice for each product.

3. The subject of pesticide safety is very important. It could even be a matter of life and death for the farm people you serve. The information has been divided into 2 parts (Items 10 and 11). Both are rather lengthy and are provided in a form that could be further subdivided into several shorter items.

**Suggested introduction**

We at this radio station are part of a worldwide information network that gathers farming information from developing countries all over the world. It's the Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency, Massey Ferguson, and the University of Guelph.

Through this Network, we bring you information on health and safety, and ways to increase food supplies for your family or to sell—ways that other farmers have used successfully.

Today we have important information for anyone who works with chemical pesticides. Here's George Atkins.

**ATKINS:** You already know that chemical pesticides are sold and used for one purpose only—to control pests. But because they kill pests, some of them can also kill people or animals, or make them very sick.

If you use chemical pesticides to help control pests, there are some things you must do to protect yourself when handling them. You must also take care that the pesticides you use will not harm other people or animals.

*Some things you should know*

Before you start using a pesticide, remember that there are many different kinds. Make sure you know exactly how to prepare and use the type you have. You must be extra careful when measuring, mixing, or pouring concentrated chemicals. Read the instructions on the pesticide container. If you don't understand them, find someone who can. Be sure you know what they say and follow the instructions. Don't believe anyone who says you don't have to be careful—only believe what the instructions say.

Also, before you use a pesticide, find out what you should do in case of an accident. For instance, if a person accidentally swallows some pesticide, in some cases you should try to make the person vomit to get the poison out of their body. But in other cases, you should not make them vomit—the instructions on the container should tell you which to do. You should know, before using a chemical pesticide, exactly what to do in case of an accident like this.

*Some general precautions*

Now, although the exact instructions may be different for different pesticides, there are some basic rules that apply to all or most of them, and these you should remember.

Whenever you are handling or are anywhere near chemical pesticides, even in a field where a pesticide has recently been used, don't let the chemical or anything that might have pesticide on it touch your mouth, your eyes, or your skin; and be sure to wash your hands with soap and water before you eat, drink, or smoke.

When handling pesticides, wear clothes that cover as much of your body as possible, to protect your skin from pesticide powder, dust, liquid, or spray. Always wear long trousers or a long apron, and a long-sleeved shirt. Protect your feet by wearing rubber boots, or shoes. If this makes you too hot, try spraying in the cooler part of the day.

Now, if you're hot and sweating and the chemical gets on your skin or into your clothing, it can get into your body more easily than if you're cool and dry. So try to do your spraying when it's cool. Don't apply pesticides while your clothes are wet from sweat or from spray. If they get wet, take them off right away and wash yourself and your clothes.

*Preparing and applying pesticides*

Let's talk now about mixing chemical pesticides. Before you start mixing your pesticide, take a little time to figure out how much you'll need. And don't mix up more than you plan to use that day. Remember that, after it's been prepared, it's not easy to store safely.

Never ever mix or measure pesticides with your bare hands. Use a special stick for mixing. Wear rubber gloves, or put your hands inside plastic bags to protect them. It's a good idea to tie the bags on with string so they won't slip off. Of course, you should make sure the bags or gloves don't have any holes in them. You must not get the chemical poison on your skin. So don't use gloves made of cloth or leather, because they will absorb or hold the pesticide and keep it close to your skin.

Now, when you're mixing chemical pesticides, don't ever let any splash into your eyes. It may burn them and could even make you blind. Never touch your eyes when you're working with pesticides, because if some of the chemical is on your hands, it could easily damage your eyes.

Don't breathe in any of the pesticide spray, dust, or fumes. And if the instructions say to use a special mask or respirator, make sure you have the right kind and use it properly according to the directions that came with it.

Now if you apply pesticides with a knapsack sprayer— the kind you carry on your back—be sure it won't leak and spill onto your back. Check it for leaks by filling it with clean water before you put pesticide into it. And don't fill it too full or it may leak from the top. Before you put the sprayer on your back, rinse the outside of it with fresh water and dry it off. This is just in case any pesticide got spilled on it when you were filling it.

When you go out to apply the pesticide to your crop, don't spray if it's windy. Perhaps the best times would be very early in the morning, or late in the afternoon when there's little or no wind.

If there is just a little wind, however, be sure to spray in the same direction the wind is blowing, so the pesticide blows away from you, not back toward you—and don't let it blow toward other people, or animals, or toward people's houses, or water supplies.

*After applying pesticides*

When you've finished applying pesticides, clean the equipment you used. Wash it thoroughly with soap and water

\* in a place that's not near any water sources such as streams, ponds, wells, or canals

\* in a place that's not near where livestock can get to it, and

\* in a place that's not near where children play.

At the same time, wash yourself and your clothing, too. A good way to get rid of water used for washing your spraying equipment and your clothes would be to spread it onto a field where it would just soak into the ground. Do the same with any spray material that you've mixed but haven't used.

After a pesticide container is empty, don't use it again for any purpose, and don't leave it where other people might find it and use it. The best thing to do is to rinse out and crush all used pesticide containers and then bury them.

Now, after you've treated a crop with pesticides, it's best to keep people and animals away from that area for at least two days or so. Otherwise, they may be harmed by pesticides on the crop, or by breathing in pesticide fumes or dust in the air.

Also, no one should eat or sell food crops that have been recently treated with pesticides. The food will still have pesticides on or in it and may poison someone if they eat it too soon. If you're not sure how long to wait before harvesting the treated produce, wait at least two weeks.

*What if a pesticide affects you*

Finally, when you're working with pesticides, if you ever feel sick or weak or dizzy, stop right away and get away from where the pesticide is. Wash with soap and water, and change into clean clothes. Then rest awhile, and if possible see a health worker. Don't use the pesticide again for at least a few days, and try to figure out what you were doing that made the pesticide affect you the way it did. Maybe you breathed in some of the spray or dust. Or maybe it was getting to your skin from the air, or from pesticides that had soaked into your clothes, or from plants you'd sprayed and then touched. It may be that the pesticide you were using was simply too strong and dangerous to use. Don't forget that the more pesticide that gets into your body, the more dangerous it is for your health—now and for the future.

So protect yourself and your family—don't take chances with chemical pesticides.

*Summary*

Now here are the main points once again:

\* Store chemical pesticides safely, away from children, animals, food, and water.

\* Don't let pesticides touch your skin or your eyes, and be especially careful when measuring and mixing.

\* Always wash yourself and your clothes after working with pesticides.

\* But don't let the wash-water or any leftover pesticides get into water supplies.

\* Protect yourself and others too.

Serving Agriculture, the Basic Industry, this is George Atkins.

**Notes**

1. This item is the second of two items in this package on the subject of Pesticide Safety. If they are relevant to the farmers you serve, please use the items in the correct sequence.

2. Identifying the major pests and understanding their life cycles is a vital first step in deciding when and how to control the pests by "chemical" pesticide or by "non-chemical" means. You may therefore wish to use this item in association with information from

Knowing Insect Life Cycles Helps You Control Pests - DCFRN Package 10, Item 9.

3. For safety and economy, it would be best if farmers could deal with their pest problems with non-chemical pest control methods as much as possible and then only use chemical pesticides when absolutely necessary. This is safer and can be more effective than relying only on chemical pesticides. To encourage your farmers in the use of non-chemical methods of control, you may wish to use this item in association with information from:

Preventing Insect Pest Damage to Crops - Package 10, Item 9