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## The Swedish statement on Paraquat

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In 1983 Sweden took the decision not to approve paraquat for use in plant protection. In principle, the basis for this decision is still the same.

Sweden considers paraquat an extremely hazardous chemical, which can cause severe and irreversible injuries in humans. The characteristics of paraquat are:

- very toxic to humans when inhaled and also toxic when ingested and in contact with the skin;
  - when human exposures reach detrimental or lethal levels, there exist no antidote;
  - the persons who survive will suffer from prolonged illness;
  - very toxic to aquatic organisms and considered dangerous to the environment;
- Injures do not only affect agricultural workers but also their very young family members. Relevant documentation on the negative effects and incidents exist.

Sweden has for long worked in a systematic way to reduce the risks from pesticides. Since 1987 four subsequent risk reduction programmes on pesticides were launched and emerged in action plans to reduce the risks to humans the environment posed by pesticides. The main objectives were: less hazardous pesticides approved and less quantities used. Comparative assessments, the precautionary principle and decision-making criteria to facilitate prompt and easy authorisation procedure were used in the approval process. About 80 out of 180 existing active pesticide substances were removed from the market during the national review in beginning of the 1990-ties. This founded a solid basis for chemicals policy on pesticides in Sweden and also for the Swedish positions in European Community since 1995.

Sweden could not support the inclusion of paraquat in Annex I of the Council directive 91/414/EC concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market. In the Swedish view that is not in line with the directive and the precautionary principle as expressed in the treaty of the EU. In February 2004 Sweden made an appeal to the European Court of Justice against the Commission decision and a request for annulment of the directive 2003/112/EC amending directive 91/414/EC to include paraquat. Also other European member states, Austria, Denmark and Finland, are in active support of the Swedish appeal.

As Sweden has banned paraquat, it was notified to the Rotterdam Convention. The aims of convention are to enhance the export and import control of hazardous chemicals and the exchange of information.

We found paraquat not to be safe to use in Sweden. Due to the fact of extensive use of paraquat in developing countries with considerable less or no work protection and difficulties to use paraquat in the very safe way needed due to its extremely hazardous properties, Sweden has the opinion that we have a global responsibility for not sending contradictory signals that paraquat is safe to use.

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