

Uganda: DDT, Malaria and Organic Farming

Paul Hendrie
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Clash Over DDT Use

- Health Ministry in Uganda wants to use DDT as one of its weapons against malaria.
- Organic agriculture producers and exporters are afraid DDT will contaminate their products and kill their growing industry.

Silent Spring

- Rachel Carson's 1962 book documented the detrimental effects of DDT, then widely used in agriculture.
- Leads to a U.S. ban on DDT in 1972 and spearheads the modern environmental movement.
- *Silent Spring* also gave birth to another, parallel movement – the organic movement.
- Consumers seek products grown without chemicals. Producers can often earn a premium.

Malaria in Uganda

- Most reported malaria cases in the world.
- Leading Cause of death and illness, responsible for 40% of outpatient visits, 25% of hospital admissions, 14% of hospital deaths.
- Greatest burden on children under 5 and pregnant women. Kills an African child every 30 seconds.
- 80% of world's malaria deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa.

(Sources: 2005 World Malaria Report, WHO/UNICEF, President's Malaria Initiative 2008 Annual Report.).

Tools for Fighting Malaria

- Bed nets treated with insecticides to repel mosquitoes.
- Indoor residual spraying of homes to kill mosquitoes.

“If I get 17 million nets, if I get my residual spraying, within five years, Uganda will not have any more malaria.”

*-- Dr. J.B. Rwakimari, program manager,
National Malaria Control Programme.*

DDT Advantages

- Long-lasting – still effective 6-12 months after spraying.
- Can repel mosquitoes as well as kill them.
- Generally cheaper than other insecticides.
- *(Source: World Health Organization 2007 position paper: “The Use of DDT in Malaria Vector Control.”)*

Concerns About DDT

- Accumulates in the environment through food chains and in the tissues of exposed organisms.
- Concern about long-term toxicity.

(Source: World Health Organization 2007 position paper: “The Use of DDT in Malaria Vector Control.”)

Uganda Spraying

- Major indoor residual spraying program launched last spring in northern provinces with high infection rates.
- US AID, through the PMI, funded the program.
- High court shut the program down in June, ruling for organic farm producers and exporters concerned their products would be compromised.

Agriculture in Uganda

- Agriculture employs 85% of the population and contributes 42% of GDP.
- More than 95% of farmers are smallholders with landholdings of 10 acres or less.
- The “green revolution” missed most of sub-Saharan Africa. Most farming is “de facto” organic.
- Uganda is among the least users of artificial fertilizers in Africa.

(Sources: International Trade Centre, International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement.)

Organic Farming

- U.S. organic food/beverage sales grow from \$1 billion in 1990 to an estimated \$20 billion in 2007. Similar growth in Europe.
- By 2003, Uganda ranked 13th in the world and first in Africa in land under certified organic production.
- Uganda organic exports grow 67%, to \$7.7 mln. in 2003 from \$4.6 mln. in 2001.
- Leading organic exports: Cotton, fresh and dried fruits and vegetables, vanilla, coffee.

Threats to Markets

- In 2005, EU officials cautioned Uganda that DDT could pose dire consequences for exports to European markets.
- After a decade of promoting sustainable, organic production of cotton and other crops in northern Uganda, the Dutch company Bo Weevil refused last year's harvest.

"Anyone who believes it should continue to buy the crop as certified organic is welcome to support these affected farmers . . . We cannot convince our inspection body to certify the same and we operate in the business of certified organic products only."

-- Marck van Esch, manager Bo Weevil