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The Landworkers' Alliance

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CALL FOR MPS TO STOP UK TRADE IN BANNED TOXIC PESTICIDES

- Agroecological farming union the Landworkers' Alliance launches letter-writing campaign to Government ministers calling for new rules to stop exporting pesticides banned in the UK
- The LWA says there are toxic double standards in the health and safety of land workers in the UK and in countries that send food to the UK market
- The LWA says imports of food grown with chemicals banned in the UK undercuts the high standards of British farmers and makes a difficult market even harder

The Landworkers' Alliance (LWA) has launched a new campaign urging people to demand that the UK Government must end dangerous and unfair double standards on pesticides trade. In its first few days, the campaign has seen more than 1385 people writing letters to the UK Government

The toxic herbicide Paraquat is banned for use in the UK due to the danger it poses to human health and the environment, but it is still manufactured in Huddersfield, UK, by chemical giant Syngenta and makes up the majority of the UK's banned pesticide exports. It's sold to countries including India, Brazil, Australia and the U.S., endangering the health of farmers and food producers who use it.

Since Paraquat – most commonly sold under the brand name 'Gramoxone' – was first put on the market by British company Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) in 1962, tens of thousands of people – including many children – have died from ingesting the pesticide, and in 2007 the UK finally banned it for domestic use due to the serious risks it poses to human health and the environment.

Agroecological farming union the LWA is asking farmers and all those who buy food in the UK to email the UK Government asking it to stop authorising the export of these deadly pesticides, and to ensure that any future trade deals don't weaken the UK's food import standards with regard to toxic pesticide residue.

The LWA has written a letter that can be sent via a simple platform to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, George Eustice, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Kwasi Kwarteng, the Secretary of State for International Trade, Anne-Marie Trevelyan and the Chief Executive of the Health and Safety Executive, Sarah Albon. People can follow this link to send a letter: <https://agroecology.eaction.online/end-the-double-standards-now>

The LWA's [Banned Pesticides Briefing Paper](#) details cases of deaths from Paraquat use.

For example in Brazil, the national health agency (ANVISA) documented paraquat as causing more deaths in the past decade than any other pesticide permitted for use, yet the UK Government is currently pushing for increased trade with Brazil.

Countries that still allow Paraquat to be sprayed on food often export that produce back to the UK, undercutting British farmers' standards on health and the environment, and on price. There's a huge risk that new trade deals being negotiated with countries like the U.S. and Brazil, will open the door to more of these chemically-grown food imports.

Jyoti Fernandes from the Landworkers' Alliance said:

"There are toxic double standards in the use of pesticides banned in the UK but still manufactured and sent abroad to land workers around the world. New trade deals that could increase the import of paraquat-grown food will make growing and selling healthy high-quality food even more challenging for farmers in the UK as well as posing a risk to environmental and human health.

We are asking people to write letters to the Government to stop the deadly export of paraquat and other toxic pesticides which are prohibited for use in the United Kingdom for health and environmental reasons and stop the import of agricultural products produced with pesticides banned for use in the UK. It's the ethical and fair thing to do."

In 2020, the European Commission proposed to 'ensure that hazardous chemicals banned in the European Union are not produced for export'. Both France and Switzerland have ended their exports. However, in 2020, the UK Government authorised the export of over 12,000 tonnes of UK-manufactured toxic pesticides that are banned for use in the UK.

Loopholes in international trade law are allowing companies like Syngenta to continue manufacturing these harmful agrochemicals and exporting them to countries where their use is permitted. But weaker regulations, untranslated user instructions and a lack of adequate PPE means that farmers in many of the importing countries are at dangerous risk of exposure, long-term health problems and fatal poisoning.

Notes to editors:

- The Landworkers' Alliance is a grassroots union of farmers, foresters and land-based workers in the UK. It is part of a global movement representing 200 million small-scale farmers under the umbrella group La Via Campesina.
<https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/new-campaign-stop-exporting-banned-pesticides/>
- LWA's [Banned Pesticides Briefing Paper](#)
- The Paraquat Papers: How Syngenta's bad science helped keep the world's deadliest weedkiller on the market by Unearthed and Public Eye.
<https://unearthed.greenpeace.org/2021/03/24/paraquat-papers-syngenta-toxic-pesticide-gram-oxone/>
- Sustain and Pesticide Action Network's [Toxic Trade](#) report
- European Commission, [Chemical Strategy for Sustainability](#) (14 October 2020)
- Additionally, the BBC's environmental reporter Claire Marshall recently interviewed farmers with Parkinson's Disease, a degenerative condition which affects movement, who believe their illness developed due to using Paraquat before its ban in the UK in 2007. In the US, nearly 900 farmers and field workers have joined forces to sue the manufacturer, claiming that Syngenta has deliberately hidden the health risks from the authorities.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-60836892>