

# CONSEQUENCES OF COUNTERFEIT CROP PROTECTION PRODUCTS

Counterfeit crop protection products are a serious threat to food safety, the environment and human health. These unregulated products do not undergo safety or efficacy testing, so the need to protect against them is urgent.

The crop protection industry is one of the most scientifically supervised and regulated sectors in the world, with rigorous measures taken to ensure that only the highest quality, safest products are used by farmers to protect the world's food supply.

Counterfeiters of crop protection products have a criminal disregard for farmers, the food chain, consumers and the environment. These lawbreakers know their illegal products can cause immeasurable harm to all levels of the food chain, damage fields plus create disastrous effects on the economies of exporting nations. Organised crime networks are also making lucrative counterfeit medicines, aircraft parts and other defective products that can result in serious injury or death – not to mention the devastating impacts they can have on the environment. Farmers and agro-retailers can take steps to avoid falling prey to these criminals.

## THE HARD EVIDENCE

Below are just a handful of the isolated incidents of counterfeit crop protection products that have been reported by police and media. These are just some of the cases that have actually been uncovered. **Unfortunately, what is unknown overwhelms what is known in terms of the scope and harm caused by counterfeit crop protection products.**

**Kenya** - Coffee crops destined for export were treated with a counterfeit crop protection product. The product was ineffective, the crop was destroyed and farmers lost their livelihood. Ingredients in the product were simple calcium

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

### Know your customer

Exporters and transporters must know the identity and background of their customers and this information must be clearly identified on shipping documents.

### Know your supplier

Buyers of crop protection products must know the manufacturing source of their materials when buying bulk, processed and formulated product.

### Check regulatory status of product in receiving country

Exporters of crop protection products and their precursors must ensure the product they are shipping is registered for use in the destination country.

### Prevent oversupply

Oversupplies often become counterfeit crop protection products or the ingredients of counterfeits.

### Hold exporters accountable

Exporters must be held accountable if their precursor ingredients end up in illegal and counterfeit crop protection products. It should be their responsibility to pay for any related storage and destruction costs incurred by police and governments who have confiscated the illegal product.

### On-farm enforcement

Existing laws regarding the use of illegal crop protection products must be enforced. Prosecution of counterfeiters and counterfeit users must become a priority for police and regulators.

### Train law enforcement, governments and farmers

Responsible crop protection product manufacturers, such as the members of CropLife International, will use existing stewardship and container management programs to help educate law enforcement, governments and farmers on how to identify counterfeit products. All training is to ensure dangerous goods don't reach the food supply.

carbonate or magnesium carbonate.

**Brazil** – Exports of unregulated active ingredients often originating in China arrive in Paraguay at levels 100 times what the national market needs. These unregulated active ingredients are repackaged in Paraguay and smuggled illegally into Brazil. The Brazilian government has dedicated police and budgets to the fight against illegal trade in counterfeit crop protection products.

**European Union** - According to a November 2006 report in The Times, hundreds of hectares of maize, potatoes and tomatoes, in Italy, Spain, and France were damaged by a fake herbicide.

**Spain** - Shortly before the end of 2006 supermarkets reported they had found an illegal crop protection product in Spanish peppers that has never been approved for use anywhere in the European Union. The Spanish pepper industry lost millions of Euros as a result of the mass destruction of their crops and widespread export bans. The illegal pesticide was found on exported Spanish peppers throughout Europe.

**Almeria** - In late 2007, diligence on the part of the Spanish police in their efforts to protect the integrity of the Spanish food industry led to the arrest of a criminal network using unapproved crop protection products.

**Ukraine** - In one seizure alone, over 560 tons of illegal pesticide were seized by police in January 2007. The material was exported from China. The seized counterfeit pesticides are still being stored in the Ukraine as the government doesn't have the budget to destroy the illegal toxic product.

**China** - In 2007, the Chinese government issued public statements outlining the need to control counterfeit crop protection products. According to their own internal statistics, \$250 million worth of counterfeit crop protection products were seized in 2007. Given the risks to food quality, the Chinese government is taking numerous steps, including the closure of over 1,000 illegal manufacturing facilities. Regulators in China announced in 2008 that they are also taking measures to ensure exports of many goods, including crop protection products and their precursors, are manufactured and shipped in compliance with the laws of China, international standards, and have all appropriate shipping documentation.

#### **Tighten up distribution systems**

Governments must clamp down on incidents of breaking or tampering with the safety and security packaging of authentic and registered crop protection products being broken, and the product being repackaged, especially in the illegal parallel and "grey" markets.

#### **Food chain stewardship**

All levels of the food chain, including retailers, must ensure that only legitimate and legal crop protection products are used on the ingredients and on the end food products that reach consumers.

#### **Systematic reporting of counterfeits**

All incidents of counterfeit crop protection products must be reported. Governments should speak to CropLife International for technical assistance, and work together to protect farmers, the environment, the food chain and ultimately the general public from the growing issue of counterfeit crop protection products.

### **THE ANTI-COUNTERFEITING TEAM AT CROPLIFE INTERNATIONAL**

In reaction to the growing crisis threatening the world food supply, CropLife International and its member companies have formed an anti-counterfeiting task force. The mandate is to work with police internationally to seize counterfeit crop protection products, arrest counterfeiters, raise awareness of governments and regulatory agencies of the dangers of counterfeit products, and help those agencies restructure and train staff to deal with this new threat.

The industry association is also working with its member companies to improve anti-counterfeiting packaging and labels to include security marks to avoid product tampering and enable purchasers to distinguish authentic pesticides from counterfeits.

The industry effort is managed by an expert in investigations with 15 years experience in working with international law enforcement specifically on the issue of counterfeits, eight years of which were spent working in the pharmaceutical industry developing law enforcement programs to fight counterfeit medicines.

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For more information, visit [www.croplife.org](http://www.croplife.org)