



Pesticide newsletter

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Jurisdictional news



India: Pesticide poisoning in Yavatmal. Complaint to the OECD

Following the poisoning in 2017 of 51 Indian cotton farmers in the Yavatmal region (Maharashtra) by the pesticide Polo, manufactured and marketed by the Swiss company Syngenta, the civil society organizations Maharashtra Association of Pesticide Poisoned Persons (MAPPP), Pesticide Action Network (PAN) India, Public Eye, European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), Pesticides Action Network Asia Pacific (PANAP) [filed a complaint](#) with the Swiss National Contact Point (NCP) of the OECD on 17 September 2020.

The text of the complaint consists of a description of the health and socio-economic consequences for the 51 affected families. The associations also ask for the recognition of the repeated violations of human rights by the company with regard to its commercial practices. Syngenta denies responsibility, arguing that there is no evidence of a link between Polo and the plaintiffs' illnesses.

However, official documents obtained by the plaintiffs reveal 96 cases of poisoning, including two deaths, linked to the pesticide Polo. Its active

ingredient, diafenthiuron, has been banned in Switzerland since 2009, for reasons of environmental and human health protection. It is considered toxic by inhalation, potentially causing organ damage following repeated or extended exposure, according to the findings of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA).

On December 15, 2020, the Swiss OECD NCP considers the grounds for the complaint to be serious enough to offer its good offices in seeking mediation. Syngenta will be held accountable for its actions, and will cease its constant denial of the consequences of the use of its pesticides. For the plaintiffs, the aim is also to prevent such poisonings from occurring, by requiring communication on the hazards of the product, and therefore the need to wear adequate protective equipment.

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