



ACTIVITY REPORT

July - September 2024

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REGULATORY, POLICY AND STANDARDS

Safeguarding Kenya's Agricultural Exports

Ensuring Kenya's agricultural exports meet international safety standards is no easy task, especially with the increasing scrutiny around pesticide residues. However, technical assistants and agronomists are stepping up, providing essential support to help farmers and exporters navigate complex global standards and ensure that Kenyan produce meets the expectations of the European Union (EU) and CODEX Alimentarius Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs).



Mr. Patrice Ngenga of Fresh Produce Exporters Association of Kenya facilitating the training



Mrs. Stella Wafukho of CropLife Africa Middle East facilitating the sensitization forum

The Importance of MRL Compliance

MRLs refer to the highest level of pesticide residue legally permitted in food. While CODEX Alimentarius serves as the global reference point, the EU maintains its own stringent MRLs. Given the EU's significant market share in Kenya's export sector, meeting these standards is non-negotiable for Kenyan exporters to the region. Failure to comply can result in rejected shipments, potentially costing the Kenyan economy millions in lost export revenue. Despite the efforts of the Kenyan government and stakeholders, export growers frequently struggle to maintain MRL compliance due to various challenges including:

- » Increased EU Scrutiny: The EU has intensified its checks on pesticide residue levels, leading to an increase in intercepted non-compliant shipments.
- » Inappropriate Pesticide Use: Some farmers inadvertently misuse pesticides, resulting in higher-than-acceptable residue levels on their produce.



An ongoing group discussion session



Building Awareness and Knowledge: Critical Workshops

In response to these challenges, aak-GROW, in collaboration with key stakeholders, hosted extensive MRL awareness workshops from September 16-20, 2024, in Makueni and Meru Counties. Over 80 technical assistants and agronomists gathered for training sessions focused on the latest MRL requirements, compliance practices, and effective pesticide management.

Among the workshop's organizing partners were the Pest Control Products Board (PCPB), the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), Horticultural Crops Directorate of the Food and Agriculture Authority (HCD), Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI), Fresh Produce Exporters Association of Kenya (FPEAK), Fresh Produce Consortium of Kenya (FPCK), and Solidaridad. By pooling resources and expertise, these organizations aimed to bolster compliance and reduce the risk of market closures for Kenyan exports. During the sessions, experts discussed critical topics, including:

- » Understanding MRL Market Requirements delving into the differences between CODEX and EU MRLs, gaining insights on interpreting standards and aligning with EU demands.
- » Combating Counterfeit Pesticides: Illegal and substandard pesticides can easily undermine compliance efforts, so participants learned to identify and report these products.
- » Ensuring Traceability and Adherence to HACCP: Traceability systems and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) were also reviewed to strengthen food safety practices across Kenya's agricultural value chain.



Participants during the MRL Sensitization in Wote, Makueni County

Moving Forward: Strengthening Partnerships and Solutions

Several key takeaways from the workshop pointed to long-term solutions for sustainable compliance. For instance, there is a need for frequent MRL awareness initiatives, particularly in counties where export crops are predominantly grown. Additionally, stakeholders highlighted the importance of strengthening public-private partnerships, which can help farmers access better resources and support.

The forum also underscored the vitality of Spray Service Providers (SSPs). These trained, certified professionals assist other farmers with the correct identification of pests and diseases and application of pesticides, improving both efficiency and adherence to safety standards.

By supporting initiatives like these, Kenya's agricultural sector can build resilience against regulatory shifts and ensure its place in the EU and global markets. The recent workshop marks an important step forward in making compliance part of everyday practice for Kenyan growers, ensuring the nation's produce reaches the world's tables, safe and sustainable.

Launch of Baseline Study on Pesticide Residues in Kenya's Horticultural Produce

Kenya's Pest Control Products Board (PCPB) recently released findings on pesticide residues in key produce: kales, tomatoes, and onions. This study, conducted across eight counties—Kajiado, Nakuru, Nyandarua, Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Makueni, Meru, and Taita Taveta—assessed residue levels to ensure food safety in these widely consumed crops. These counties were selected due to their significant role in commercial horticultural production.

The results show compliance with Codex Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs), which are international food safety standards for pesticide residues. Specifically:



Kales: 100% compliance with Codex MRLs, 69.44% with EU MRLs.



Tomatoes: 100% compliance with Codex MRLs, 41.67% with EU MRLs.



Onions: 100% compliance with Codex MRLs, 96.97% with EU MRLs.

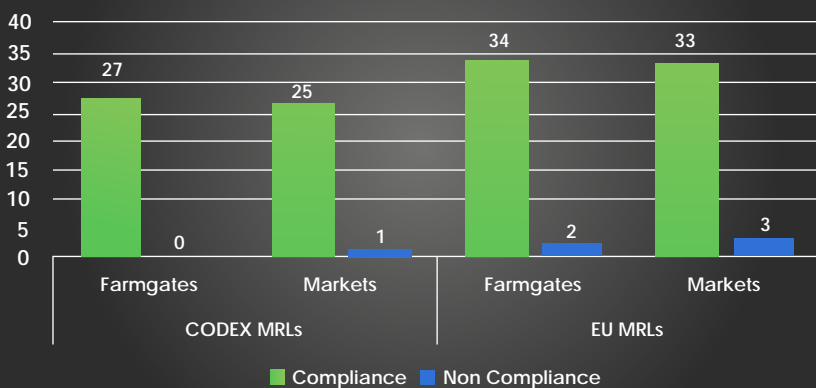


The Chief Guest, Mr. Collins Marangu unveils the report alongside the Chairman PCPB and the CEO



Cake cutting ceremony as part of the unveiling

MRLS COMPLIANCE AT FARM LEVEL VS MARKETS



The Codex MRLs as depicted in the percentage rate of compliance, indicate produce is generally safe for consumption. However, the lower percentage values for the EU MRLs occurred because the EU lowered MRLs to default levels (0.01 mg/kg) for active ingredients not registered for use in the EU, posing challenges for Kenyan exports to the EU.

The Baseline report highlights the success of farmers using approved pesticides and underscores the need for MRL harmonization globally. Aligning MRLs could ease trade barriers for Kenya and other developing nations, benefiting international markets while maintaining safety standards. As Kenya expands these studies to more counties, both domestic consumers and international buyers can anticipate increased confidence in Kenyan produce.



STEWARDSHIP

Kenya Launches Africa's First ISO-Certified Protective Gear for Safe Pesticide Use

The use of pesticides in agriculture demands strict adherence to safety measures, especially through Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). However, in tropical regions like Kenya, heat stress and discomfort often prevent farmers from using heavy protective gear, posing a major risk. To tackle this issue, Kenya has made strides by launching the continent's first ISO-Certified personal protective clothing designed specifically for agriculture.

Pest Control industry members Syngenta and BASF, together with the International Center for PPE (ICPPE) at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and Kenya's Pest Control Products Board (PCPB), have introduced ISO 27065-Certified PPE. This breathable, reusable gear offers farmers a safer, more comfortable alternative designed for their needs. The certification, KS ISO 27065 C1, guarantees that the clothing meets international standards, providing crucial protection for pesticide applicators and re-entry workers supporting Kenya's push toward safer, more responsible farming practices.

Over 110 Kenyan farmers participated in wear studies, offering feedback on comfort, durability, and design. Their insights guided the creation of PPE that aligns with the unique demands of Kenya's agricultural climate, proving affordable and accessible in the local market.

This landmark initiative is a collaborative victory for Kenya's agriculture. By prioritizing safe, sustainable farming practices, stakeholders including aak-GROW /CropLife Kenya aim to foster a lasting culture of safety within farming communities, ultimately benefiting the farmers, their families, and the environment. With the increased adoption of this PPE, Kenya sets a new standard in ensuring responsible use of pest control products and protecting pesticide users across Africa.



"Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) plays a significant role in pesticide risk assessment and management. Together with our members and other stakeholders, we advocate for the accessibility, comfort and affordability of PPE. This collaboration has resulted in the launch of the first ISO 27065 certified PPE appropriate for our local conditions to reduce user exposure risks effectively. We welcome other stakeholders in promoting behavior change among farmers and pesticide users, ensuring proper PPE utilization down to the last mile."

Eric Kimunguyi
CEO, aak-GROW/CropLife Kenya



The First ISO 27065 C1
Protective Clothing in Africa

The Integrated Poison Information Center Campaign



Velma Wekesa of aak-GROW during the session



Dr. Aywak of the Kenyatta National Hospital facilitating a training session

The Integrated Poison Information Center (PIC) campaign which ran from August 26th to September 14th aimed to increase awareness around managing poisoning incidents. Targeting medical professionals, parents, farmers, and the public, this campaign focused on educating people about PIC's toll-free emergency services, using channels like social media, radio, and community events.

The campaign's efforts included training 172 medical professionals in Kirinyaga, Nakuru, and Nairobi counties on handling poisoning cases. Additionally, over 1,200 medical professionals participated in online training sessions organized by aak-GROW, in collaboration with Bayer East Africa and Kenyatta National Hospital. This initiative stressed the dangers of improper pesticide use and encouraged safer practices, aiming to reduce both accidental and intentional poisoning.

Several organizations supported this campaign, including aak-GROW, the Ministry of Health, Kenyatta National Hospital, and the Toxicologists Society of Kenya. PIC's first half of 2024 report revealed that Kirinyaga and Nairobi counties had the highest poisoning cases, underscoring the need for community education on the safe use of pest control products. Nakuru County serves as a pilot site for the "Stewardship Mashinani" Initiative, aimed at bringing safe practices to rural communities. Through these combined efforts, PIC reached over 4.5 million people, spreading awareness and building a safer community through responsible pesticide use and poison management.



Medical Professionals from Kerugoya County

The Drive for Better Pesticide Use in Kenya's Rice Production

Kenya's appetite for rice is growing fast! Ranked as the country's third most important crop after maize and wheat, rice demand is up by over 12% each year, especially in urban areas. With Kenya's population rising at 2.7% annually, the International Rice Research Institute predicts a national annual need of 1.29 million tonnes of rice by 2030.

However, boosting rice production comes with challenges. One major challenge being pesticide misuse by farmers. The right use of pest control products can significantly increase both the quality and quantity of rice harvests. But it's not just about having the right products; it's knowing how, when, and where to apply them. Farmers need guidance on targeting specific pest life-cycle stages, using the correct equipment, and handling products safely to protect the environment.

In response, aak-GROW launched a campaign across Kenya's key rice-growing regions in Mwea, Kirinyaga County. Through areas like Mahiagaini, Kirogo, and Kutus among others, we shared messages on responsible pesticide use, safe disposal, and environmental protection. Collaborating with Yara East Africa and Corteva Agriscience, aak-GROW reached out to farmers and agro-dealers, spreading practical tips to improve yields while safeguarding the environment.

This initiative could help shape a more sustainable future for rice farming in Kenya, paving the way for a self-sufficient rice industry.



To the Last Mile: aak-GROW Champions Food Safety at Farmer Field Days and Trade Fairs

As part of aak-GROW's commitment to sustainable agriculture, we're taking our Stewardship Mashinani program to the fields, meeting farmers where they are. This on-the-ground initiative emphasizes training and engaging farmers directly, ensuring they understand the critical role they play in food safety and security simply by handling pest control products responsibly.



Fresh Crop Farmers Field Day



Potato Field Days



Nairobi International Trade Fair



Naivasha Horticultural Fair

At aak-GROW, we believe that every farmer, equipped with the right knowledge, becomes a champion for safe food production. That's why our stewardship efforts go to the very last mile—delivering practical lessons on responsible pesticide use, from the moment of purchase to proper disposal.

During these one-on-one sessions, we cover essential practices, including reading product labels, using Personal Protective Equipment, and storing products safely. We also stress the importance of observing the Pre-Harvest Interval (PHI) and utilizing certified spray service providers. Through these interactive sessions, we empower farmers to make informed choices that not only protect their crops but also their health and the environment.

To ensure we reach as many farmers as possible, our team is actively present at shows, field days, and trade fairs across Kenya. In the third quarter of 2024, we've participated in a range of prominent events, including the Nakuru ASK Show, the Nairobi International Trade Fair, the Hortifair, and the National Potato Council Farmer Field Days. We've also met with farmers at the Kiambogo Potato Farmers Field Day and the Fresh Crop Farmers Field Day.

Through our presence at these events, aak-GROW is dedicated to empowering farmers with the tools and knowledge they need to safeguard their crops, their health, and our country's food security. At each interaction, we're building a future where responsible farming is at the heart of every field in Kenya.



Nakuru ASK Show

Training Summary 2024

Responsible Pesticide Use Training



Busia ATC, Busia County



16th – 19th July

Participants: 37 (Plant Doctors, Farmer Service Centers, Spray Service Providers)

Partners: aak-GROW, CABI, Syngenta Foundation, PCPB



ACK Hall, Kitale,
Trans-Nzoia County



3rd – 5th July

Participants: 31 (FSC Leaders from all Sub-Counties of Trans-Nzoia)

Partners: aak-GROW, CABI, PCPB, County Government of Trans-Nzoia

Farmer Service Center Leaders Training

Spray Service Providers Training



Mabanga ATC, Bungoma County



10th – 14th June

Participants: 19 (Spray Service Providers from Bungoma and Busia Counties)

Partners: aak-GROW, PCPB, CABI, Syngenta Foundation



Kabarnet Town, Baringo County



30th July – 2nd August

Participants: 53

Partners: aak-GROW, Department of Agriculture (Baringo County), World Food Program

Farmer Training

Agro-Dealers Training



Bukura ATC, Kakamega County



11th September

Participants: 39 (Selected agro dealers from Kakamega, Bungoma, and Busia Counties)

Partners: aak-GROW, PCPB, Farm Inputs Promotions (FIPS) Africa

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Strengthening Our Vision Through Teamwork - CropLife Kenya's Team Building Initiative

At CropLife Kenya, our vision centres on “Better food, Grown sustainably for Better health,” captured in our tagline, ‘Better Farming, Better Food, Better Health’. Achieving this vision takes more than expertise in agriculture; it requires a collaborative, motivated, and united team that is committed to making this vision a reality.

Recognizing this, from August 27th to 30th, 2024, the CropLife Kenya secretariat participated in intensive team-building sessions designed to enhance collaboration, communication, and cohesion among colleagues. This team-building initiative was a powerful opportunity for individuals to step out of their routine roles, work side by side with colleagues of varying seniority, and strengthen the bonds essential for our collective success.

The team-building program included a mix of indoor and outdoor activities, each designed to promote team bonding, skill development, and fun. Activities ranged from problem-solving exercises to physical challenges, allowing team members to demonstrate and develop a variety of skills. The diversity within the team—comprising colleagues from different departments, roles, and levels of seniority—added depth to these exercises, as each individual brought unique perspectives to the challenges at hand.

Building a better food system requires a team that is not only skilled but deeply connected and aligned with the organization’s mission. The team-building experience reinforced this by nurturing a sense of unity and trust that translates into more effective and collaborative daily work practices. The benefits go beyond individual improvements, as stronger relationships and open communication ultimately enhance the organization’s overall impact and success.

As we look forward to future initiatives, we are reminded that working together is our strongest asset. Every member of CropLife Kenya has a role in ensuring “Better Farming, Better Food, Better Health” to life, and our team-building experience has further strengthened our resolve to achieve this vision.





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