

## **Advocating for Safer Agriculture: Better Cotton Champions the Abolition of Highly Hazardous Pesticides**

Better Cotton, the global forerunner in cotton sustainability, alongside its Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Coalition partners, has released a position paper advocating for the worldwide discontinuation of highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs) in agriculture.

In the lead-up to the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5) scheduled in Bonn, Germany, from 25-29 September, Better Cotton and its Coalition allies are appealing to officials to implement regulatory measures promoting the cessation of dangerous agrochemicals.



***Photo credit: Better Cotton/Morgan Ferrar Location: Bhavnagar district Gujarat, India, 2019. Description: Better Cotton Farmer Punamchand Jalela mixing ingredients found in nature to make bio-pesticide.***

The Coalition, which comprises of entities like Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), has highlighted key strategies to fast-track actions against HHPs in agriculture, which include:

Formulating a global strategy for the discontinuation of HHPs through unified and time-sensitive measures.

Encouraging agricultural producers to adopt sustainable farming methods, such as agroecology and IPM, with an emphasis on minimizing or excluding the use of toxic pesticides by providing supportive policies and resources.

Funding research to discover and popularize safer HHP alternatives, ensuring their feasibility and accessibility for global farmers.

Enhancing awareness through educational programs and training sessions, enabling farmers to integrate IPM techniques and make educated decisions regarding pest control.

Collaborating with governments, industry stakeholders, and civil society to eliminate HHP subsidies, bolstering regulatory measures and ensuring the successful phase-out of HHPs.

HHPs, traditionally used to counteract pests in cotton and other crops, pose severe health risks to agricultural workers even when personal protective equipment (PPE) is employed.

Better Cotton has made remarkable strides in reducing HHP usage in cotton cultivation. For instance, in India, the utilization of HHPs by Better Cotton Farmers plummeted from 64% to 10% between the 2014/15 and 21/22 cotton seasons. Moreover, the usage of Monocrotophos, categorized as highly toxic by the World Health Organization, descended from 41% to a mere 2%.

With the Coalition's collaborative efforts, an IPM methodology has aided over seven million farmers in transitioning to eco-friendly alternatives across a range of commodities like cotton, cocoa, coffee, palm oil, and tea.

Better Cotton's Principles and Criteria (P&C) define an IPM approach as fostering a robust crop, preventing pest infestation, promoting beneficial organisms, observing fields, and managing resistance.

To support the global discontinuation of HHPs, training programs are extended across all nations where Better Cotton is operational, ensuring that cotton farmers are proficient in adopting the IPM methodology.

The IPM Coalition appreciates the United Nations' Strategic Approach for International Chemicals Management (SAICM) for orchestrating the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5). This conference aligns with the organization's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and offers a platform to discuss chemical management.

Alan McClay, CEO of Better Cotton, remarked, "To shield farmers and their lands from the detrimental effects of HHPs, a collective global action is imperative. Through the IPM Coalition, we amplify the urgency of this issue and ardently hope for regulatory bodies to collaborate in ushering transformative changes."

