

Dealers have been given a June 30 deadline to comply with the directive

GOVT RECALLS 18 AGROCHEMICALS FROM MARKET OVER CANCER

BY CHARLES ETUKURI

The Government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, has recalled 18 agrochemicals and pesticides, citing extended side effects on crops, livestock and human beings.

Agricultural officials have also completely banned the usage of these chemicals in pest and fungal management.

In a letter to the chairperson of Croplife Uganda and all authorised local agents that supply agricultural chemicals and pesticides, the commissioner for crop inspection and certification in the agriculture ministry, Paul Mwambu, said some of the banned chemicals are linked to cancer.

The chemicals linked to cancer, Mwambu said, have been completely banned from the market. Mwambu, who is also the secretary of the agricultural chemical review committee, added that the chemicals that are not directly linked to cancer will be recalled by June.

The dealers have been given a June 30 deadline to ensure that all the banned and recalled pesticides and chemicals are removed from the shelves.

Some of the banned chemicals include: Alpha cypermethrin, atrazine, ametryn, butachlor, carbendazim, carbofuran, chlorothalonil, chlorpyrifos, dichlorvos, dimethoate, diuron, fipronil, imidacloprid, indoxacarb, mancozeb, profenofos, propanil and thiamethoxam.

In an interview with *The*

Weekend Vision, Mwambu said the recall and ban of chemicals and pesticides is anchored in the need to protect the country from the life-threatening side effects of these substances.

"The Government has guided the public on what should be allowed from now on and what should not be allowed, and Uganda is not acting alone. It is what is called a global village. The science that applies to a white person is the same that applies to a black man. So, we normally agree at an international level and when we come downwards, we check certain facts and then, once we confirm that they are correct, we act quickly," he said.

Mwambu pointed to the case of DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane), a synthetic organochlorine insecticide known for its effectiveness against insects such as mosquitoes, which was finally banned.

He said some of the banned chemicals end up in exported products like coffee, which earns the country foreign exchange. In 2025, Uganda's coffee exports reached 8.7 million 60kg bags valued at \$2.5b. The surge, according to agriculture ministry officials, was driven by a rise in Robusta coffee production across the country.

Mwambu said the ban on chemicals is meant to ensure that gains such as the boost in coffee export figures are not affected. He added that a national campaign against the massive abuse of some of the chemicals has begun,



PAST INVESTIGATION

The ban and recall have come almost five years after a *New Vision* investigation revealed that harmful pesticide contaminants exist in tomatoes and cabbages sold in major markets in Kampala and other parts of the country.

The investigation found that some farmers spray their crops up to the day they transport them to markets in order to make their crops attractive and to extend their shelf life.

The study, which was carried out across the four regions of Uganda, covering the districts of Kampala, Jinja, Mbale and Mbarara, also revealed that these chemicals posed a dangerous risk to the health of consumers.

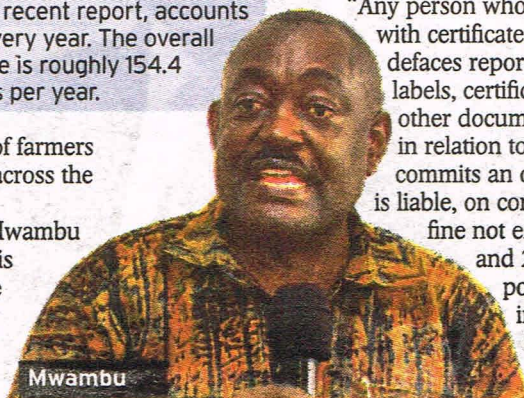
According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, 59% of the 41 agrochemicals registered for use in Uganda are classified as dangerous. The report said highly hazardous agrochemicals, including those banned within the European Union, somehow find their way into the Ugandan market. These agrochemicals and pesticides include Glyphosate or Weed Master, Cypermethrin, Mancozeb, Carbosulfan, Dichlorvos and Paraquat.

Reports have also directly linked Bayer's (the German agrochemical giant) herbicide roundup, glyphosate, to cancer.

According to the Uganda Cancer Institute (UCI), cancer is an increasing cause of death in Uganda, with an estimated 34,008 new cases registered annually. The disease, UCI officials said in their recent report, accounts for 22,992 deaths every year. The overall cancer incidence rate is roughly 154.4 per 100,000 persons per year.

with the sensitisation of farmers and pesticide dealers across the country.

Despite the recall, Mwambu said, the Government is aware that some of the chemicals are still stocked in several agro-input shops



Mwambu

Recalled agrochemicals

	PRODUCT	SAFETY CONCERNS
1	Alpha Cypermethrin	Water pollutant, toxic to bees and an endocrine disrupter
2	Atrazine	An underground water contaminant
3	Ametryn	Moderately toxic to most aquatic organisms, honey bees but less to birds
4	Butachlor	An environment contaminant with moderate toxicity to most fauna and flora
5	Carbendazim	High doses cause infertility (destroys testicles of mammals)
6	Carbofuran	Acutely toxic to humans, birds, aquatic organisms, bees, earthworms and non-targets arthropods and soil micro-organisms
7	Chlorothalonil	Toxic to aquatic organisms
8	Chlorpyrifos and Chlorpyrifos Methyl	Linked to delay in mental health development among children
9	Dichlorvos	An enzyme inhibitor for acetylcholinesterase responsible for impulse transmission
10	Dimethoate	An endocrine disruptor, causes neurodevelopmental harm on fetus and reproductive toxicity
11	Diuron	Prolonged or repeated exposure may lead to kidney, spleen and liver damage
12	Fipronil	Toxic if swallowed, inhaled or in contact with the skin.
13	Imidacloprid	Toxic to pollinators and harmful if swallowed
14	Indoxacarb	Toxic to bees
15	Mancozeb	A reproductive toxicant and a probable carcinogen
16	Profenofos	Causes severe respiratory paralysis, muscle twitching and excess mucus discharge in nasal cavity
17	Propanil	A liver, kidney, spleen and testes toxicant and eye irritant
18	Thiamethoxam	Toxic to bees, may be a probable carcinogen to humans

around the country. He added that some of the chemicals had been banned long ago, but that some traders were taking advantage of the situation, bribing relevant officials and using porous borders to smuggle them into the country.

PENALTIES

Mwambu said the Agricultural Chemicals (Control) Act, 2006, an Act that regulates the manufacture, storage, distribution, use, importation and exportation of agricultural chemicals in Uganda, provides penalties for those caught on the wrong side of the law.

He said the Act aims to control the use of these chemicals to ensure safety and proper handling.

The Act states that any person convicted of any offence under the law is liable to a fine not exceeding 60 currency points (about sh1.2m) or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two-and-a-half years, or both. The law also provides that:

"Any person who tampers with certificates or alters or defaces reports, invoices, labels, certificates or any other document issued in relation to this Act commits an offence and is liable, on conviction, to a fine not exceeding 100 and 20 currency points or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding

five years, or both."

Mwambu revealed that plans to revise some of the provisions of the Act to introduce more stringent penalties are under way.

"We plan to amend the Act so that we increase the penalties to deter the sale of dangerous chemicals in the market," he said.

DOWN-TOWN SAMPLES

When *The Weekend Vision* visited agro-input shops at Container Village in Kampala, most of the banned chemicals were still on sale, with dealers acknowledging that the agriculture ministry officials had only met them the previous week to inform them about the ban and recall.

However, Joy Mayanja Kato, the chairperson of the Agro-Chemical Traders Association, confirmed that agriculture ministry officials had notified them about the ban on the sale of some of the chemicals.

"The message came out about two weeks ago. We had a meeting at Container Village with the agriculture police, the inspector chemical board and Mwambu, and they informed us about the chemicals that they had banned. But when you look at the list they gave us, some of those chemicals had not been banned from being imported. Some of the importers already had existing licences that allow them to import the same chemicals for up to five years," Mayanja said.