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Every year, there are 385 million cases of unintentional acute pesticide poisoning, says a PAN study

According to [FAO data](#), the annual use of pesticides worldwide has been relatively stable since 2010 at around 4.1 million tons, almost double (+81%) what it was in 1990.

In a [study](#) published recently in [BMC Public Health](#), a group of experts commissioned by the [Pesticide Action Network](#) (PAN) present an estimate of the number of cases of unintentional, acute pesticide poisoning (UAPP) in the world.



The numbers given are based on a systematic review of scientific publications over the period 2006–2018, supplemented by mortality statistics from the World Health Organisation (WHO). The study covers 141 countries, 58 by the 157 articles and an additional 83 by data from the [WHO Mortality Database](#).

Altogether, the study estimates that 385 million cases of UAAP occur annually, causing 11,000 deaths. These figures mean that almost half of the farmers in the world are involved every year in unintentional acute pesticide poisoning and that, therefore, they risk chronic consequences (loss of quality of life, loss of well-being, and loss of ability to work) and even death in the medium or long term as acute poisoning events are likely to recur during their lifetime. Southern Asia is

the most affected region by far, followed by South–Eastern Asia and East Africa, in the case of non–fatal UAPP.

The last estimate, made in 1990 by a WHO task force, showed around one million UAPPs cases and 20,000 casualties, as well a two additional millions of intentional pesticide poisoning every year. These figures are considered to be underestimates in so far as a large proportion of the poisoning cases that would be classified as acute today was then categorised as “mild” and was not recorded.

The decrease in casualties observed between 1990 and 2020 can be put on the account of new regulations that have banned some extremely highly toxic pesticides and encouraged better protection of pesticide users.

Despite serious data and methodological difficulties in making these estimates, the authors of the 2020 report can state with confidence that pesticides constitute a major health issue for agricultural producers.

This statement can only be supported.

In this context, it is justified to be concerned about the partnership signed between FAO and CropLife (the association of pesticide producers) [read – third part].

It is important to mention here that the negative health impact of pesticides is not limited to farmers but also affects consumers, as already reported here earlier [read]. In addition, pesticides have a negative impact on our environment (soil and water, in particular).

To know more:

- Boedeker, W., Watts, M., Clausen, P. et al. The global distribution of acute unintentional pesticide poisoning: estimations based on a systematic review. BMC Public Health 20, 1875 (2020).
- WHO, Public health impact of pesticides used in agriculture, 1990.

Selection of past articles on hungerexplained.org related to the topic:

- Pesticides: an issue that poisons our agriculture, 2020.
- The global food crunch: myth or reality? 2018.
- Production and use of pesticides: an infringement on the rights to food and health, 2017.