

Welcome PAN Europe Annual Network Conference 2005 in Krakow
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It's really a threefold pleasure to give you a warm welcome to this PAN Europe *Annual Network Conference*. Why threefold? Firstly, we will have two days together filled with an interesting programme of presentations and discussions looking towards better environmental, health and rural economies. Secondly, we have a common aim – the reduction of pesticide dependency - and it is great to see, that there is also an excellent basis for common Europe wide action, as 19 countries are represented here. And thirdly, this is the first PAN Europe Annual Network Conference taking place in a central or eastern European country.

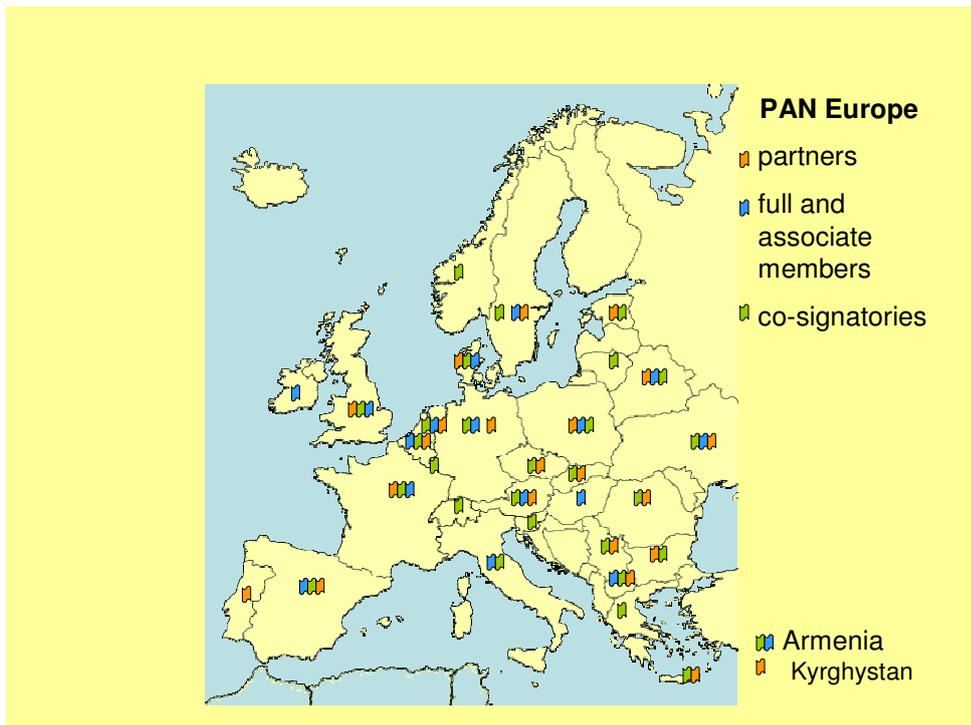
Before starting with some short introductory remarks, please allow me to say some words of thank. I would like to thank the Ministry of Agriculture, for taking the time to participate. And I would like to thank the Polish Ecological Club, our cooperating partner. Thank you Maria and colleagues, for all the efforts made to provide an excellent organisational framework for today's conference and the NGO meeting tomorrow. In addition I would like to thank our funders who financially have made this conference possible: the EU DG Environment, the Rausing Trust, and the Danish Environmental Protection Agency.

Why this conference? From the PAN Europe point of view it is essential, that Europe wide concerns regarding the use of pesticides are discussed at meetings with Europe wide participation. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a valuable role in developing pesticide and environmental policy, as recognized by the EU Commission and others.

Why this conference in Eastern Europe? As you may know, the Pesticide Action Network was founded 1982 in Malaysia as a global Network with five Regional Centres (Africa, Asia, Europe Latin America, North America). But before the Berlin wall came down, and even during the 1990s there were only sporadic contacts between PAN Europe and its facilitating organisations PAN Germany & PAN UK and groups in Central and Eastern European countries. However, with the integration of Europe, it became obvious, that NGOs, representing the interests of the civil society, need a more balanced geographical representation. Therefore PAN Germany started a project for NGO capacity building in Central and Eastern European Countries" in 2001, supporting our central and eastern European partners to engage in dialogue with governments and other stakeholders and learning from central and eastern European experience, especially the traditional farming systems, which we value for the biodiversity, landscape and ecological services we need to conserve within the EU.

Meanwhile there is a considerable network of NGOs in CEECs which – within the whole European network - dealing with concerns regarding the current

status of pesticide use in Europe. PAN Europe full and associate members, partners and co-signatories are now from all European regions.



We civil society organisations are deeply concerned about the facts which justify why we advocate for a strong commitment to pesticide use reduction. What are these facts? Here are just a few examples which will be highlighted during this conference in more detail.

According to the results of the EU food monitoring more than 50% of the food from plant origin contains pesticide residues. In addition the water standards are not met in Europe. And we can detect pesticide residues in soil, in the air and in all living beings.

These facts about the fate of pesticides raise concern because there has been a steady increase in our scientific understanding of the “behaviour” and toxicological properties of pesticides. We know that pesticides can cause immunological and endocrine disrupting effects, neurotoxic disorders and cancer. And there is growing concern about the health effects of exposure to very small quantities of pesticides.

To protect us and our environment from these unwanted effects, a complex system to regulate pesticides has been developed. But today we know that in spite of all the regulations, safe pesticide use is still not possible, even in rich and highly regulated countries.

The reality in pesticide markets is extremely worrying. In western and southern European countries there is nearly no hint of pesticide use reduction even though the EU Commission decided more than 10 years ago that there was a serious need for pesticide use reduction. And in Central and Eastern European countries the pesticide industry is currently working hard, to create a growing pesticide market. And - coming back to where this conference takes place - Poland in particular offers a large potential market for crop protection companies. Furthermore, the structural change in Poland is being seen by industry related analysts as a model for other central and eastern European countries. Here just some of the most current figures to underline the evidence.

According to AGROW (October 7, 2005) in Poland, in 2004, pesticide production increased by 36% compared with the previous year. Sales of formulated products in the domestic market rose by 21%, and also in active ingredients terms, sales rose by 21%. The pesticide industry knows that Polish farmers will receive additional finance from EU funds, and they are prepared to take advantage of it. Therefore they run strong campaigns to stimulate increased pesticide use. In Poland – only in the first 6 month of this year - pesticide companies spent 2.7 million dollars on agrochemical advertising. The companies with the highest advertising expenses are those, whom we know well from the TOP-list of the global leaders among agrochemical companies: They are among others the world market leader Bayer, Syngenta (No. 2), and BASF (No. 3).

The huge economic power of these few companies not only results in their dominance over the global, European and national pesticide markets. It also implies that information and knowledge about non-chemical methods is pushed to the sidelines, encouraging dependence on pesticides to increase even further. This is even more worrying, as resources for public and independent extension work are cut back in many countries.

These developments form the background to PAN Europe's goals which are:

- Expansion and promotion of information and knowledge of non-chemical pest management measures
- Reduced dependency on pesticides by promoting alternatives to chemicals
- A high level of protection for European citizens' health and environment
- Sustainable agricultural systems and viable farming livelihoods
- As well as the safe and sustainable management of pests, diseases and weeds in our homes, schools, workplaces

We hope that this Annual Network Conference will serve the PAN Europe goals mentioned. And we specifically hope, that we all will leave this conference with a more precise idea of what needs to be done to raise awareness especially in CEECs and to start developing positive action plans with our partners in this region of Europe.

Thank you.