



**Pesticide  
Action  
Network**  
Europe

## ***Illegal HCB and DDT waste storage in Gdansk, Poland***

Greenpeace was informed during the early summer 2012 about illegal pesticide waste, including POP wastes storage in Gdansk just 30-50 meters from the Baltic Sea. According to the Basel Convention guidelines, POP waste should be stored in closed buildings or in containers and absolutely no leakage is allowed. We found the hazardous waste in loose, leaking plastic bags, so the POP wastes are polluting the environment. According to the BC guidelines, waste types should be stored separately whereas in this case all waste types are stored together.

Most of the HCB waste was transported to Gdansk from Kalush, a well-known Ukrainian contaminated site. Five hundred trucks and two ships of waste arrived to the Polish city through the Baltic Sea. According to the official papers, the HCB concentration did not exceed 1,6% of HCB in this waste. However, in Poland some samples indicated even around 30% of HCB in waste.

Greenpeace took samples in summer 2012 around the area of Port Service in Gdansk. We took nine soil samples both from inside and outside the facility in the storage area. In all samples, even 20 to 50 meters from the fence of Port Service, we measured HCB (Hexachlorobenzene), which is one of the “dirty dozen chemicals” from the Stockholm Convention. HCB is carcinogenic (2B), teratogenic -disturb the development of an embryo or foetus-, an endocrine disrupting substance. Furthermore HCB is a POP, as it is very persistent and accumulates in the animal as well as human body.

Beside this area is not an agricultural area, Greenpeace found several other pesticides in the top of the soil. We can be almost sure that the pollutants came from Port Service facility, and the pollution is the consequence of the inappropriate storage. The most dangerous substances were alpha-HCH, HCB and DDT. All these substances are restricted for many years; HCB and DDT are banned under the Stockholm Convention.

The Polish HCB limit is surprisingly high for industrial areas. In many countries the maximum limit value is 1 mg/kg, but the Polish law allows 15 mg/kg. For atrazine, which is a hazardous substance as well, but does not accumulate in human tissues, the limit value is just 0,05 mg/kg. For that reason, HCB levels did not reach the limit value for industrial areas, but atrazine exceeded the Polish maximum limits almost 20 times outside the plant and 50 times inside the plant. Stricter alpha-HCH and DDT industrial limits were exceeded in the sample from inside the plant. We measured several other pollutants like prometryn, simazine, but there is no limit value for most hazardous pollutants.

Greenpeace informed local Authorities & Basel Conv. Secretariat about the testing results and [asked for](#) the immediate clean-up of the contaminated area inside and outside the plant; repackaging and proper storage as well as hazardous substances handling at Port Service and a complete monitoring of the whole area for all possible pollutants.

Supported by the pressure from Greenpeace and from the media, the whole management of Voivodship Environment Protection Inspectorate in Gdansk has been dismissed. The chairman of Port Service Company has been fired by the owners: German Blum Gruppe. The company's chairman has been accused to endanger the environment because National Environment Protection Office has withdrawn its previous decision, which would have allowed Port Service to import another 4.000 tons of waste from Ukraine. Pesticides and HCB waste left for incineration were temporarily secured with foil sheets. The local environment inspectorate undertook a serious inspection at Port Service. A number of additional irregularities, such as transgression of emission standards by the company, have also been noted. An expert study stated that in Ełganow, where the toxic slag, ashes from incineration got disposed, that toxic substances can reach surface waters in 1.5 years, reaching groundwater would take about 3 years. The authority therefore decided that the waste have to be removed from there to a safer storage place.

But still, as of August 2013, 12.000 tons of ash contaminated with HCB and other pesticides are still in the unsealed pit in Ełganow. And there is no one to pay for the clean-up. So instead of one toxic time bomb we have now two, one in Kalush and one near Gdansk.

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