

PAN Europe Annual Network Conference 2006 in Bologna  
Note from PAN Europe  
Carina Weber, Chair PAN Europe/Executive Director PAN Germany

I am pleased to welcome you to the PAN Europe Annual Network Conference 2006 here in Bologna and I hope you all arrived safely to look forward to an interesting, stimulating and inspiring conference.

PAN Europe is really grateful that this conference is hosted by SANA, and we would like to explicitly express our thanks.

PAN Europe is also happy to have AIAB, the Italian Organic Farming Association, represented by president Andrea Ferrante and also Legambiente, presented by deputy director Francesco Ferrante with us, as we clearly meet joint challenges.

Not personally represented but equally important for the success of this conference are the funders Directorate General Environment of the European Commission and Sigrid Rausing Trust who kindly gave financial support.

By choosing the title “Alternatives to chemical crop protection for the reduction of risks and pesticides dependency” for this conference, PAN Europe expresses a matter of key concern for a large part of the European public.

It is safe to say that the way pesticide problems have been dealt with in Europe at policy level during the 20th century was not successful, as there is still a long and worrying list of unwanted effects resulting from pesticide use. Keywords are, for example carcinogenic, mutagenic, reproductive or hormone disrupting properties of pesticides. Consumers and the environment are exposed to such pesticides via food and water. And also from the economic point of view worries have been raised.

PAN has been monitoring the marketing and use of pesticides and the effects of pesticides on health and environment for many years. Up to now we have not found any indication that there is really a change for the better.

Looking at the political agenda to solve the problems causes mixed feelings. On the one hand PAN Europe is happy to see that there is now – at long last – an EU Thematic Strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides on the way. On the other hand we see that the draft of this Thematic Strategy is still missing clear targets, timeframes and indicators for pesticide use reduction.

From the PAN point of view an important reason for the failure of pesticide policies in Europe so far is that alternatives to chemical crop protection are not addressed or promoted properly by the various policies. Therefore this conference serves to meet five aims:

1. To have a look at the state of IPM, ICM and organic farming
2. To scrutinize whether alternative pest management strategies and methods are adequately addressed at the EU level
3. To give the floor to experiences in successfully implementing alternatives
4. To take note of initiatives involving farmers, retailers and consumers
5. And last but not least to provide a platform supporting fresh and energetic initiatives to reduce pesticides dependency in Europe.

Over fifty participants from twenty countries are taking part in this conference. Therefore let's seize this opportunity to learn from each other, to further develop strategies for action, and to build alliances for success.