



PRESS RELEASE

IUF supports changes to the Rotterdam Convention to protect health and save lives

Exposure to pesticides regularly kills or destroys the health of thousands of agricultural workers. A [shocking report in 2021](#) estimated that there are 385 million cases of unintentional, acute pesticide poisonings annually including 11,000 fatalities among farmers and farmworkers.

This year, the IUF is joining with global unions and national federations to demand more effective control of the international trade in hazardous chemicals. There are more than 350,000 chemicals circulating in the global economy, supposedly controlled by the Rotterdam Convention; however, the labour movement has been highly critical of the Convention for its weak procedure resulting in the failure to control paraquat and asbestos. Also concerning is the influence of the pesticides industry over the application of the Convention.

The 11th Conference of the Parties for the Rotterdam Convention is being held in Geneva from May 1 -14.

Currently, the Convention's Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure for hazardous chemicals and pesticides ensures that countries exporting pesticides must seek the prior informed consent of the importing countries before shipping; however, to list products using the PIC procedure requires consensus. This requirement, initially introduced to foster cooperation, has instead evolved into a veto mechanism that is now threatening the viability and effectiveness of the Convention. A small group of countries continue to block the listing of several highly hazardous substances.

The IUF along with sister global unions will be campaigning for the adoption of a new annex to the Convention which will allow parties who want to share information about a substance considered dangerous by the Chemical Review Committee to do so, even when the listing of the substance has been blocked by a failure to reach consensus. Listing on the new annex will require a 75% majority vote. Furthermore, for chemicals listed in the new Annex VIII, explicit prior informed consent will be required from the importing country before the hazardous substances can be shipped.

Croplife, the international trade association of agrochemical companies, has a large lobbying contingent at the Rotterdam meeting for the purpose of influencing countries to defend their trade in pesticides.

"It is vital for global health and the environment that Croplife fail in undermining the important new annex to the Rotterdam Convention. The lives and health of millions of agriculture workers depend upon reform."

Sue Longley, IUF General Secretary

The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) is an international trade union federation composed of 407 organizations in 126 countries representing over 10 million workers. The IUF is based in Geneva, Switzerland.