

# Obsolete pesticides in Georgia

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Waste management in Georgia is a largely neglected field in environmental management. Since neither a comprehensive waste management system nor a co-ordinating authority existed in Soviet times, waste has been disposed of for several decades without consideration for the environment. Municipal wastes were frequently mixed with industrial wastes, and the disposal of hazardous wastes from hospitals, military plants, radioactive installations and other sources were often totally unregulated. At present, legal landfills operate under minimal standard requirements, but because urban waste collection systems are barely functional, there are many illegal dumpsites.

Known waste disposal sites for hazardous waste are overloaded and generally not adequately isolated from the environment. Also the collection system is basically in a state of collapse, so wastes are stored in "temporary" sites and on lands belonging to companies. This is the case, for example, with many sites where outdated agricultural pesticides are stored and with radioactive waste in disposal sites.

In 1992, when the economy began to collapse, the total amount of solid wastes generated was in excess of 60 million tonnes, of which 70% was industrial waste. No reliable inventory is being carried out at present. According to some estimates, 1.3 million tonnes of hazardous wastes have accumulated throughout the country. Though the hot spots are known, lack of funding makes any improvements impossible.

The environmental impact of the uncontrolled disposal of solid waste in Georgia is enormous, but its effects are virtually unknown at present. Because of financial constraints and unclear distribution of responsibilities there are great difficulties in carrying out even the initial activities required.

Beside those problems, the Waste Management Law is considered one of the outmost important problems. A big gap in the field of the Environmental Legislation representing the Waste Law is considered as a highest priority. At this time the Law is being developed.

The management system for the toxic substances cannot function effectively without major changes in the existing practice. During the Soviet era, the distribution and use of pesticides and fertilisers was centralised. No law existed to regulate activities in the field. Concerned separate agencies and organisations acted in accordance with the norms, instructions and government standards issued by the central all-Union authorities.

In Georgia, there are about 20 pesticides storage sites. Old stocks of pesticides and mineral fertilisers stored at regional bases and warehouses temporarily were causing serious environmental problems. Some 400 tonnes of pesticides and 3,500 tonnes of fertilisers have passed their expiry date and are unsafe. It has to be pointed out that they are failing to meet the sanitary standards and environmental requirements, which would be creating an immense threat to the environment.

In poor storage conditions pesticide packaging can become damaged leading to leakage and exposure of the chemicals. Due to poor, not environmentally sound disposal, pesticides limits are exceeded 30-50 fold in the rivers and groundwater.

Investigations were carried out in some agricultural areas to check the rate of soil pollution by pesticides. Concentrations of DDT, DDE, Hexacyclochlorohexane and Lindane were measured and found to meet the current standards.

Despite these examples, the management system for chemical substances is outdated and not currently functional in Georgia. Weak sectoral approaches (in agriculture, industry, health, etc.) hinder quantity and quality estimates and are unable to ensure that chemical substances are used safely. There is currently no reliable system for integrated monitoring of environmental pollution.

Concerning persistent organic pollutants, there is no inventory of their sources in the country and consequently no action plan to reduce their usage. The Georgian Ministry of Environment is co-ordinating the preparation of the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) with the support of the World Bank. The government plan to identify actions required in the management of chemicals has been approved. Although the definition of possible actions is close to completion, implementation may well be impeded by financial constraints. The existing information on managing of obsolete pesticides in Georgia is limited. There are no funds to carry out an inventory of obsolete chemicals.