

## **Regulation of Toxic Chemicals in Sri Lanka and its effects on poisoning**

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**Objective:** To highlight the regulatory mechanism of chemical imports in Sri Lanka and to review its impact on morbidity and mortality of poisoning. **Method:** Review of rules and regulations, international conventions/ protocols on import, usage and disposal of chemicals along with literature review. **Results:** Sri Lanka is predominantly an agricultural country. According to the Registrar of Pesticides, consumption of pesticides in Sri Lanka had a 1.7 fold increase in annual consumption in 2005 than in 1995. Imports of technical grade materials of pesticides had increased by 5.3 times whereas formulation imports increased by 11.4 fold in 2005 compared to 1995. The free economy policy encouraged the imports of pesticides including prohibited pesticides such as DDT and Endrin through open general license. The Control of Pesticides Act No. 33 of 1980 regulates imports and other concerns of pesticides. The Registrar of Pesticides is the sole authority implementing the laws and regulations under this act. The Pesticides Technical Advisory Committee advises Registrar of Pesticides (ROP) on policy and technical matters. The use of WHO class 1a and 1b pesticides for pest control in Sri Lanka was banned since 1995. Stockholm convention on POPs and Rotterdam convention on Prior Informed Consent Procedure was implemented through ROP. Vienna convention and Montreal protocol on Ozone Depleting Substances as well as the Basel Convention for Chemical Safety and Trans- boundary movement of Hazardous Wastes and their disposal are implemented through the Central Environmental Authority (CEA). The import and use of all the above chemicals will be monitored and regulated through the CEA. Imports and Exports Control Act regulates imports of chemicals to Sri Lanka. HS coding system enables the custom to levy duties/ tariffs as well as screening banned, restricted or registered for use pesticides and other chemicals. Custom ordinance has a monitoring effect on all imports<sup>1</sup>. These rules and regulations have a positive impact on reduction of suicides in Sri Lanka indicated by a 50% reduction in 2005 when compared with 47 per 100,000 populations in 1995<sup>2</sup>. Morbidity shows 1.5 fold increase while mortality shows 1.3 fold reduction in 2005 compared to 1995. Toxic effects of pesticides was the 6<sup>th</sup> leading cause of hospital deaths in 1995. In 2005 it is the 11<sup>th</sup> cause<sup>3</sup>. **Conclusion:** An effective mechanism regulating the import and use of highly toxic pesticides and other chemicals will reduce the mortality of poisoning. **References:** (1) Fernando R, De Silva S. International Conventions, rules and regulations controlling chemical usage. In: Banned Chemicals in Sri Lanka. Colombo : NPIC, 2006: 06-13 (2) Gunnel D, Fernando R. The impact of pesticides regulation on suicides in Sri Lanka. Int. J Epidemiology 2007; 1-8 (3) Annual Health Bulletins, Department of Health Sri Lanka. 1995- 2005