

September 5, 2005

To Mrs Radha Singh
Secretary,
Union Ministry of Agriculture

Dear Mrs Singh,

I am writing to you regarding the endosulfan tragedy in Kerala and the committees formed by your ministry to look into the matter (see chronology: Annexure 1). The Centre for Science and Environment has been involved in this matter since 2001 and we were really delighted when your ministry had, in September 2004, constituted the committee headed by C D Mayee, the then agriculture commissioner, to re-examine the entire issue and also the report of the committee headed by O P Dubey, assistant director general, Indian Council of Agriculture Research. At that time we had written to you as well as the chair and all the members of the committee putting forth the main issues of concern.

We have recently gone through the full report of the Mayee committee and are disappointed to note that the committee, even while it has accepted the demand to stop the spraying of endosulfan in Kerala, has completely ignored the evidence on people's health and the use of this particular pesticide in the region.

You will recall that the key reason for reopening the matter and for setting up yet another committee was the information that the Dubey committee had not sufficiently looked at the evidence, which established the presence of endosulfan residues in the blood of people and in the environment. Instead, the Dubey committee had based its findings on the report of the Tamil Nadu-based accredited private laboratory Fredrick Institute of Plant Protection and Toxicology (FIPPAT) (now known as International Institute of

Bio-technology and Toxicology), which was found to be based on manipulated data. It is important to note that the fact that the data was not correct has not been contradicted by scientists or industry.

You will recall that in our magazine *Down To Earth* issue April 15, 2004 we had published information that FIPPAT had found endosulfan residues in blood samples but had not reported it or had underreported it. The levels of endosulfan found by FIPPAT (186 parts per billion -- ppb) were much more than even those reported by NIOH (78.74 ppb).

Even if confirmatory tests did not find endosulfan in blood samples, there is no answer, why the blood samples were underreported or why, residues of alpha and beta isomers of endosulfan -- which the industry claims cannot be detected as the pesticide degrades fast -- were found but not reported. FIPPAT also underreported the levels of endosulfan found in environmental samples, for which there is no answer.

The Mayee report devotes just a single paragraph on FIPPAT report and it is unfortunate that despite the information at hand, the Mayee report reiterates the claim that FIPPAT found "no residues in human blood samples". Nowhere it is mentioned that the committee has re-examined the FIPPAT report and its basis.

It is also not enough to ask for further epidemiological research on the matter as it will only delay the matter. The issue was raised as early as early 2001 and since then there have been many investigations into both the causes as well as the health implications for people. Any further delay, will only suit the pesticide industry, which as you can well understand, is reluctant to accept any responsibility for the ailments caused to people.

It is important to note that the issue concerning suffering people. The fact is that if the committee was to establish, or even indicate, the presence of endosulfan in the blood of people, it would provide the basis of the discussion between people and the company for providing medical relief and compensation. It is for this reason that this report is extremely important and it must do justice to the issues that have been raised on the veracity of the research. It is also clear that the stakes are very high and it will be in the interest of industry to suppress and convolute the facts. I am attaching for you a letter we have recently received and published from top industry representative and its vituperative stand will make it clear to you that the interests against the people of Padre are strong.

This is a matter as we have said earlier which concerns people, who continue to suffer as a result of pesticide exposure. It is for this reason that we are writing to you, once again. We hope you will take up this issue with your concerned officers and will find ways to do the justice to the issues concerned.

I will look forward to hearing from you

With regards
Yours cordially

Sunita Narain