

# REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI

ONG PROPLETE, ENVIRONNEMENT ET SANTE (PES)

ACCREDITED MEMBER OF UNCCD-ECOSOC

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## National Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) Report - Burundi Executive summary

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Burundi covers an area of 27,834 km<sup>2</sup>, including 2,000 km<sup>2</sup> of lakes and 23,500 km<sup>2</sup> of potentially cultivable land. It is a landlocked country, 1,200 km away from the Indian Ocean and 2,000 km from the Atlantic Ocean, located between the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west, Rwanda to the north and Tanzania to the east and south. The population, estimated at 10,262,865 in 2008,<sup>1</sup> is made up of more than 90% of rural families and 51% women. The annual population growth is 3% and the average population density is 310 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>. With this density, the country is ranked, on the one hand, as the 2<sup>nd</sup> most densely populated region on the African continent and, on the other hand, among the 5 poorest countries in the world with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita estimated at 320.09 USD per year, and 67% of its population living below the poverty line in 2014.

The economy of Burundi is essentially based on agriculture, which accounts for approximately 53% of the gross domestic product and employs 94% of the population, 90% of them living in rural areas. This sector provides 95% of the national food supply.

Food self-sufficiency, to which the majority of a predominantly rural population still contributes today, is becoming increasingly fragile due to several factors: continuous parceled-out farming land, soil fertility degradation, low purchasing power of farmers who make little use of agricultural inputs (pedigreed seed, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.) and, above all, the strong pest pressure. As a result, the farmers resort to the use of pesticides to deal with crop pests. These crops are of two kinds, namely cash crops such as coffee, cotton, rice, tobacco, sugar cane, and food stock and market-garden crops (beans, corn, peas, potatoes, tomatoes, etc.).

With this diversity of crops grown in very diverse agroecological areas, the phytosanitary characteristics appear extremely dense. Although losses due to crop diseases and pests have not been precisely quantified, they constitute a major limiting factor in Burundi. These losses are estimated at about 30% of crops due to soil degradation and crop pests. To fight against these, the Government of Burundi has put in place mainly chemical-based control strategies, improved farming techniques, the use of resistant/tolerant varieties, physical control, and biological control. Among these different control methods, chemical-based control of crop pests is the most popular, especially for cash crops. These strategies are coordinated by the establishment of the Department of Plant Protection (DPP) within the Ministry of Agriculture and livestock since May 1992, whose main missions are:

- development and supervision of the implementation of the national policy on crop protection,
- implementation of plant protection legislation, especially for the control and registration of phytosanitary products,

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<sup>1</sup> Estimation of the population in 2016 (Projection by ISTEERU 2008-2025)

- phytosanitary inspection throughout the national territory to prevent pests and assess the efficiency of the techniques and products used,
- the promotion of the marketing of phytosanitary products.

To effectively carry out its functions, the DPP is divided into three sections responsible for Monitoring and Response, Control and Approval of Pesticides, and Phytosanitary Control. In addition to the provincial phytosanitary inspectors, the Plant Protection Directorate also has a National Committee for the Registration and Control of Pesticides (CNHCP), for which it provides the secretariat services. This committee, whose members are appointed by decree from the country's various socio-economic sectors, namely agricultural production, research, environment, education, customs, trade, justice, health, and the private sector, is responsible for:

- Reviewing applications for authorization and registration, as well as applications for renewal, and expressing its opinion to the Ministry of Agriculture and livestock.
- Proposing, if necessary, a list of prohibited pesticides;
- Keeping a public register of authorizations or registrations;
- Defining the methods used for product evaluation (assay);
- Making use, if necessary, of expert assessments carried out by laboratories recognized by the Ministry for agriculture;
- Providing advice on all matters submitted to it by the relevant ministries and formulating any recommendation within its competence, particularly with regard to marketing and use requests.

CNHCP's initial work resulted in the registration of 131 pesticides in Burundi, including 69 insecticides, 2 nematocides, 16 fungicides, 23 herbicides, 16 rodenticides, 3 chemical mediators, 1 insecticide-nematicide and 1 other that is not in any of these classes. Similarly, 24 pesticides are prohibited from being imported and used in Burundi, including 7 insecticides, 2 fungicides, 3 herbicides, 1 nematocide, 3 acaricides, 3 rodenticides and 5 from other groups.

**Out of the 76 active ingredients included in pesticides registered in Burundi, 51 active ingredients or 67% are HHPs. Even if the trade names suggest 131 pesticides, the active ingredients contained in them are a total of 76 different (chemical) substances.**

In Burundi, the official recommended control strategies are mainly chemical-based control, improved farming techniques, the use of resistant/tolerant varieties, physical control, and biological control. Among these different control methods, chemical control of crop pests is the most popular, especially for crops that are organized in sectors such as coffee, cotton, rice, tobacco, and sugar cane. Pest and disease control is carried out specifically for each type of crop and pest.

In non-cash crops, the use of pesticides is very limited; however, potatoes and tomatoes are regularly sprayed with Dithane M 45 to control mildew.

Periodically, the country experiences attacks of the African armyworm, *Spodoptera exampta*, which attacks not only wild grasses, but also young, cultivated grasses such as wheat, rice, and corn. Control measures used against this pest are based on the use of insecticides but paradoxically, fenitrothion, which is the registered substance allowed for use against these worms, is not currently available in Burundi, so farmers end up using alternative substances intended for other pests that are sometimes not officially registered.

Although the pesticide trade at the national level is very restricted and not accessible to all, these agricultural inputs are informally liberalized and the tax and pricing system applicable to pesticides provides for exemptions from transaction tax and customs duties.

All pesticides used in Burundi are imported mainly from China, Belgium, Kenya, and Indonesia.

Marketing procedures are governed by public procurement law and follow the tendering procedure. It should also be noted that the major users of pesticides are parastatal companies such as Cotton Management Company (COGERCO), Mosso Sugar Society (SOSUMO), Coffee Sector Regulatory Authority (ARFIC), Regional Imbo Development Society (SRDI), and many others.

For food crops, the Department of Plant Protection (DPP) is responsible for registering pesticides and sending a list of the authorized ones to the few approved outlets from which farmers or community groups can buy them. Only pesticides registered in Burundi are allowed to be marketed in the country.

For a more effective pesticide use and in order to reduce the damage to human health and the environment, the observations made in this study lead us to recommend the following:

- Support the DPP and research institutions, in particular the Agricultural Sciences Institute in Burundi (ISABU), to facilitate the implementation of various national programs for the sound management of pesticides while promoting biological alternatives;
- Phase out all Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) from the list of registered pesticides in Burundi;
- Strengthen the DPP to enable it to properly manage obsolete or unregistered pesticides;
- Identify plants that are sources for biological pesticides and promote them to producers;
- Educate the population on the rational and strictly controlled use of less/no highly hazardous pesticides;
- Support the DPP in the translation of regulatory texts into the national language (KIRUNDI) to facilitate the understanding of their instructions for farmers;

- Equip the DPP and the CNHCP with the necessary financial and human resources so that they can properly carry out their control and monitoring work;
- Regularly make public the list of registered pesticides in the official newspaper in Burundi.

In Burundi, there are no specific policies supporting the elimination of highly hazardous pesticides, but sectoral strategies and legal frameworks make up for this shortcoming, and in this case the environmental code is the main one worth mentioning. Its main action is to reduce the import of chemical pesticides to encourage the use of alternative cultivation techniques and the use of local pest management options made from local plants.

In Burundi, the current trend is towards an increased use of highly hazardous pesticides, especially for market gardens and industrial crops, with a general lack of knowledge about the negative effects of pesticides on human health and the environment. Due to lack of knowledge about alternatives, as well as about how and when to apply pesticides, these constitute alarming risk factors for both humans and the environment. It is imperative to take precautionary measures to protect the environment and those exposed, as well as to deepen the research on the use of pesticides in the area to better understand their impact, as well as on biological alternatives to pesticides so as to mitigate the negative impacts of the current situation.