



Taller Ecologista - POPs Country Situation Report (Argentina)

September 2018

Executive summary

This report is an update of the Citizen Report about the National Situation of Persistent Organic Pollutants in Argentina written in 2006 and coordinated by Taller Ecologista in collaboration with RAPAL/Cetaar¹.

During the first half of the year and part of the second of 2018, interviews were conducted with national officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship (MREyC in Spanish), the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MAyDS² in Spanish) and the National Institute of Industrial Technology (INTI in Spanish). Officials of the National Agro-food Health and Quality Service (SENASA in Spanish) were contacted through email. In this way, we could obtain the Review and Updating of a National Implementation Plan (NIP³) and see the possibilities of implementing it, future actions and the technical availabilities to analyze POPs⁴ in food.

Legal status of the new POPs.

Argentina ratified the amendments in COP 4 of the Stockholm Convention through the decisions SC-4/10 Alpha hexachlorocyclohexane, SC-4/11 Beta hexachlorocyclohexane, SC-4/12 Chlordecone, SC-4/13 Hexabromobiphenyl, SC-4/14 Hexabromodiphenyl ether and heptabromodiphenyl ether (commercial octabromodiphenyl ether), SC-4/15 Lindane, SC-4/16 Pentachlorobenzene, SC-4/17 Perfluorooctane sulfonic acid, its salts and perfluorooctane sulfonyl fluoride, and SC-4/18 Tetrabromodiphenyl ether and pentabromodiphenyl ether (commercial pentabromodiphenyl ether) in February 2012⁵. The amendment adopted in the COP 5 through the decision SC-5/3 Technical endosulfan

¹ In the following mentions of Rapal it will be referred to as Rapal/cetaar. Rapal: Action Network on Pesticides and Alternatives in Latin America. Cetaar: Center of Studies on Appropriate Technologies of Argentina.

² The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable development of the Nation becomes Secretary of Environment and Sustainable development of the nation on 5 Sept. 2018, decree: 801/2018 and 802/2018. See More: <https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/#!DetalleNorma/190820/20180905> <https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/#!DetalleNorma/190818/20180905> Date of consultation: 6 Sept. 2018

³ <http://chm.pops.int/Implementation/NationalImplementationPlans/NIPTransmission/tabid/253/Default.aspx> Date of consultation: 27 June 2018

⁴ POPs acronym for Persistent Organic Pollutants.

⁵ <http://chm.pops.int/Countries/StatusofRatifications/Amendmentstoannexes/tabid/3486/Default.aspx> Date of consultation: 18 Sept. 2018

and its related isomers was ratified in February 2013 and entered into force in Argentina in May 2016. Therefore, there are six new substances that have still not been ratified: SC-8/10 Decabromodiphenyl ether (commercial mixture, c-decaBDE), SC-6/13 Hexabromocyclododecane (HBCD), SC-8/12 Hexachlorabutadiene, SC-7/13 Pentachlorophenol and its salts and esters, SC-7/14 Polychlorinated naphthalenes and SC-8/11 Short-chain chlorinated paraffins (SCCPs). The Government of Argentina is urged to ratify these missing amendments.

About the update of the NIP

The update of the National Implementation Plan (NIP) started to take shape in 2014 and was carried out by the National Institute of Industrial Technology (INTI) – Basel Regional Center for South America (CRBAS in Spanish) at the request of the then National Secretary of the Environment. The following year, in July, the National Project Coordination Committee (CNCP⁶) was formed, with the presidency in charge of the then SSCyFAyPC⁷ (in Spanish), the then SAYDS (in Spanish) of the Nation, CRBAS and representatives of various ministries, NGOs and business chambers, trade associations, among others. The Executive Unit (EU⁸) was also created - its presidency corresponded to CRBAS, and an Advisory Board (AB) of the Executive Unit (EU). To that end, a call was made to participate, but neither Taller Ecologista nor RAPAL were invited to the meetings of the year 2015 for unknown reasons. However, invitations to the meetings in February 2016 were received, together with other NGOs⁹. Nevertheless, before continuing with future calls, the NGOs requested access to key information from the INTI, in connection with actions carried out within the first NIP. This was never given. Realizing that there was no real commitment from government for NGOs to be genuinely involved, the NGOs stopped participating.

About PCBs¹⁰

There have only been concrete official actions in connection to PCBs. From 2011 until 2017, Argentina conducted a GEF project¹¹ about this substance, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme. The objective was to eliminate oil and equipment contaminated with PCBs and to reduce the risk of emissions to the population

⁶ The project is the updating of the NIP.

⁷ Under-Secretariat for environmental control and pollution prevention (SSCyFAyPC) now with a range of secretariat (environmental control and monitoring secretariat-SCyMA) of the MAYDS secretariat of the nation.

⁸ In the update of the NIP 2017 informs that the CNCP, EU and AB were created but it is not said of those who depend on or their functions.

⁹ Bios, Vecinos Autoconvocados de Cipoletti, Salud sin Daño.

¹⁰ PCBs acronym for polychlorinated biphenyls.

¹¹ "Manejo Ambientalmente Racional y Disposición de PCBs en Argentina" (ARG/10/G48) <https://www.thegef.org/project/environmentally-sound-management-and-disposal-pcbs-argentina> Date of consultation: 17 Sept. 2018

and the environment. Regulations¹² in Argentina only permit the export for disposal of equipment and oil with PCBs content over 5000 ppm. In lower concentrations, decontamination takes place in the country. An environmentally sound manner of elimination or the reduction in other uses of PCBs¹³ is still pending.

Awareness-raising activities and survey

Since the ratification of the Stockholm Convention no official activities are known, including informative and awareness-raising ones about POPs which are indispensable for the citizenship to be able to participate, avoid exposure, and act and present claims in case they are affected by the damages that these substances cause.

The NGOs that are developing this report designed a survey called: “How much do we know about Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)” through the social network Facebook aimed at common citizens with the objective of having an insight about how much the population knows about these substances.

Analyzing the answers, there was an indication about the almost nil broadcast of the POPs from the national governments responsible for Environmental Public Policies from 2005 to 2017. 70% of the responses (of a total of 408) affirmed not having received any invitations for any official activities about POPs nor information about these, for example, through any massive broadcast campaign. The survey was not intended to allow a quantitative representative sample, but it is a qualitative indicator to take into account.

Technical capacity for measurement of POPs

According to SENASA, analysis for the presence of pesticides among the POPs pesticides is carried out in the vegetable laboratory or in laboratories of members of the SENASA official network, identified in the category of authorized labs. SENASA has a laboratory for dioxins and furans¹⁴, with the objective of controlling these substances in agricultural products and agricultural by-products¹⁵. Currently they are working on trace analysis of dioxins and furans in fishery products (all kinds of unprocessed derivatives of the activity) using the EPA 1613 method. Their services are for the SENASA, but they can offer them to the private sector later¹⁶. In Argentina no laboratories – neither public

¹² See page 98 in a Guide for the Interpretation and Application of the Basel Convention in Argentina <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/argentina/Publications/Energia%20y%20Desarrollo%20Sostenible/Guia%20Basilea.pdf> Date of consultation: 18 Sept. 2018

¹³ This activity was not incorporated into the GEF project on PCBs.

¹⁴ <http://www.senasa.gob.ar/informacion/servicios/laboratorio/control-dioxinas-y-furanos> Date of consultation: 30 June 2018

¹⁵ It mainly refers to unprocessed foods.

¹⁶ According to the consultation conducted on the analyses that are made in that laboratory, sent to the email dioxinas@senasa.gov.ar Response date: 18 Sept. 2018

nor private- carry out measurements of dioxins and furans in atmospheric releases, such as emissions of waste incinerators. Neither are there any tests for dioxins and furans carried out in ashes and sediments of incineration.

Final considerations

After ten years of the design of the first National Plan, there have been almost no changes. For example, places contaminated with POPs and identified years ago still remain to be remediated. Nothing is known about obsolete pesticide stockpiles and human health and the environment are still at risk. There are no national, provincial or local policies leading to the full compliance with the Convention. On the contrary, the modification of the Zero Garbage Law¹⁷ in the autonomous city of Buenos Aires that allows the incineration of household waste is a setback, showing the lack of interest in reaching goals that lead to reduction of unintentional releases of POPs.

Ordinary citizens know little about POPs and the Convention, which allows the non-compliance of the Government. We feel it is a long and difficult way to go. Raising awareness in the communities near unintentional releases of POPs would be a first step required in the agenda for compliance with the Convention according to art. 10., as well as scheduling specific activities to reduce dioxin and furan emissions from industrial sources. The competent authorities of the national, provincial and municipal government need to fulfill their responsibilities of informing the citizenship, a fundamental human right.

We hope that the opportunities for dialogue that were initiated in 2018 with the new officials of the Ministry of Environment will continue. We believe it is necessary to maintain an information exchange and to agree on a teamwork plan leading to specific actions for the full compliance with the Convention. We need to have legislations on this matter, and above all, to allocate budget items to carry out the NIP for it not to become a dead letter. We also hope that in our next report we could make known and detail actions in connection to serious, sustained and responsible public policies safeguarding citizen's health and the environment.

We express our concern about the impact of the measures¹⁸ taken by the national government on September 5th, 2018, in which the Ministry of Environment and

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http://www.buenosaires.gob.ar/areas/leg_tecnica/sin/normapop09.php?id=81508&qu=c&cp&rl=1&rf&im&mot_toda&mot_frase&mot_algun
a Date of consultation: 15 Sept. 2018

¹⁸

See footnote # 2

Sustainable Development stopped being at ministerial level and became a Secretary. In addition, about the impact of this measure re: the possible reduction of staff and of budget to carry out actions of NIP of the Stockholm Convention.