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Pesticide Use Practices and Safety Issues: The Case of Cocoa Farmers in Ondo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT This study investigates pesticides in common use in cocoa agriculture, dangers associated with their use and established regulatory incentive (if any) that protect farmers and farm workers against pesticide risk. The study was conducted in Idanre local government area of Ondo state, Nigeria. A total of fifty farmers, fifty farm workers and thirty two pesticide marketing agents were interviewed using structured questionnaire. The commonly used pesticides identified are Gammalin 20, Aldrex 20, Perenox, Cacaobre Sandoz, copper sulphate, Basudin, Thionex and Uden. Result reveals that most of these pesticides are classified as 'highly' or 'moderately' hazardous by the world Health Organization and have been banned or restricted in many economically advanced countries. Contrary to this most of the marketers claimed that the pesticides are registered in Nigeria and do not present acute health hazards to users, by-standers, livestock, wild-life, and environment in general. Analysis shows that farmers are not taking the necessary precautions to prevent hazards associated with their use. Farmers and farm workers suffer from discomforts ranging from headaches, tiredness, vomiting and nausea to skin problems such as skin burn and itching after using these pesticides. Although the Federal government of Nigeria through the Federal Environmental Protection Agency recognizes the problems of pesticides use and has put in place legal and administrative procedures to protect users as well as the nation's environment from the adverse effects of pesticides, work on effective monitoring, enforcement or implementation of their procedures and mechanisms is not being pursued with the seriousness required.