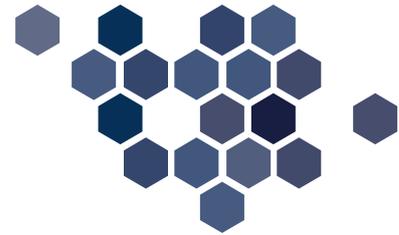


POLICY SUMMARY: **PROHIBITING AGROCHEMICAL USE IN SENSITIVE AREAS**



OVERVIEW

This policy summary provides recommendations on why and how to prohibit the use of agro-chemicals in environmentally sensitive areas. It outlines options for providing this support, followed by examples from various countries.

SUMMARY OF POLICY OPTIONS

Policy options include:

- Ban on selected agrochemicals or agrochemical categories in a sensitive area;
- Comprehensive ban on use of all chemical pesticides, soluble synthetic fertilizers, or both in a defined sensitive area;
- Requiring farming and landscape management in the sensitive areas to be organic, possibly with temporary or permanent subsidy support to mitigate the economic impact of such requirement.

Options may be taken up at all levels of government, depending on the nature and scope of the sensitive areas.

RATIONALE

General incentives for organic agriculture may not be enough to achieve high environmental benefits, particularly in sensitive natural areas such as water catchments and protected areas such as national parks, where public interest would require all farmers in the area to transition to organic practices. In such cases, it can be appropriate for the national, regional, or local government to impose legal restrictions on the use of chemicals in agriculture, or to require that farmers farm organically.

In water catchment areas, a local decree creating protection zones where the use of inorganic fertilizers and agrochemicals is prohibited or where conversion to organic agriculture is compulsory, may be a more effective way than chemical water treatment to ensure drinking water quality from both the standpoint of cost effectiveness, achievement of policy objectives, and general sustainability.

In national parks and other high conservation value areas, whenever agriculture is practiced, prohibiting the use of agrochemicals is a way to protect biodiversity - the core value of such areas. Compulsory organic management in such areas can also be a way to support diverse and attractive farming landscapes, integrated in the surrounding natural environment.

Besides naturally sensitive areas, certain zones can also be considered



sensitive from a social impact point of view. For example, areas surrounding schools, nurseries and hospital, whether public or private, may be considered sensitive for public health reasons. Prohibition to use certain or all agrochemicals in such areas can be decided by local or national governments to protect their population's health.

SCOPE

This type of measure is most relevant to the political objective of increasing societal benefits (primarily in terms of environment and health). It is suitable whether the organic sector is in an early or late stage, and whether or not organic agriculture is regulated. It is especially suitable for municipal and other local governments, even if the national government is generally non-interventionist.

POLICY OPTIONS

Level of intervention

Municipalities, especially when they are responsible for drinking water, may implement bans and/or require organic management practices. Such bans or requirements can be in the form of municipal decrees and similar instruments, decided by local councils or public referenda. Regional and national areas can intervene in the case of large protected areas such as parks and wildlife refuge.

National legislation can also provide a framework that will provide regional and local governments municipalities with authority and support to implement such measures at their levels.

Type of intervention

The type of intervention will be largely based on the situation and the policy objectives. Where the problem is mostly generated from commercial agriculture in or around the sensitive area, the approach may be to require and support conversion to organic farming. For sensitive urban spaces where agrochemical applicators and sites may be numerous, a ban on agrochemicals is suitable. Whether or not all agrochemicals or only specific categories are banned will depend on the policy objectives. For example, where both pesticide residues and nutrient pollution are targeted for reduction in water supplies, both pesticides and chemical fertilizers would be in the scope of intervention.



COUNTRY EXAMPLES

Germany: The city of Leipzig has been supporting organic agriculture since 1992 as a means to improve water quality. The city has made organic agriculture compulsory in the area critical for water protection (next to the river). To accompany the obligation to convert to organic in the critical area, the city established a compensation scheme for farmers.

Armenia: Environmental legislation on nature-protected areas allows organic agriculture as the only form of agriculture within those national park territories that accommodate economic activities.

Czech Republic: The Nature Protection law 114 of 1992 prohibits the use of agro-chemicals in agriculture in nature protection areas and nature parks. A significant portion, about 9%, of agricultural land in the Czech Republic is included in protected areas under this law. Derogations can be granted by the nature protection authority only in special cases (such as herbicide application for invasive species elimination). Farmers in those areas usually receive subsidies to compensate for the restrictions imposed on them.

Denmark: The municipalities of Aarhus, Aalborg and Egedal have

decided to ban the use of pesticides on both publicly owned and privately owned land in order to protect drinking water. Aarhus has worked on protecting its groundwater from pesticide and nutrient contamination for decades by stopping agrochemical use on public lands and, at first, introducing voluntary approaches with financial incentives and technical support for farmers. After only partially achieving its objective, the city of 300,000 inhabitants turned to mandates and injunctions to farmers to convert to organic farming. The change had a rapid and positive impact, doubling within two years the land area with protected groundwater.

Fiji: The Island of Cicia banned the importation of inorganic fertilizers and agricultural chemicals in 2006 as a prelude to the conversion of the entire island to organic agriculture, which was achieved in 2013. The decision was taken by the Cicia Island Tikina Council, a council composed of local Chiefs with the support of government agencies.

Belgium: The region of Bruxelles-Capital banned the use of glyphosate in its entire territory. This applies to both publicly and privately managed land, including on farmland.