

Decontamination of obsolete pesticides

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A project has been launched for the disposal of 4,000 tonnes of unusable pesticides from 216 warehouses on the territory of the country, which will continue until 2019. The implementing agency of the project “Environmentally Sound Disposal of Obsolete Pesticides and Other Plant Protection Products with Expired Shelf Life” is the Enterprise for Management of Environmental Protection Activities (EMEPA). The financing is provided with the support of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme, which will invest the amount of 23.4 million Swiss francs in the destruction of unusable pesticides.

The pesticides in the warehouses, accumulated even before 1990, are mainly of two types – fungicides for treating plants against fungal diseases, and insecticides – for pest control. Some are in liquid, others in powder form, and they are now to be repackaged for transport in accordance with the European requirements for the international carriage of dangerous goods by road. The largest quantity of pesticides is located in a warehouse in the “Piskavets” area near

Vratsa. For decades, more than 300 tonnes of plant protection products with expired shelf life have been stored there.

According to Reneta Georgieva, Executive Director of EMEPA, Bulgaria is on the way to resolving a long-standing problem, namely the disposal of tonnes of hazardous substances that have been accumulated in warehouses since the time of the former TKZS (Labour-Cooperative Agricultural Farms) and APK (Agro-Industrial Complexes). The process of disposal of obsolete plant protection products will be carried out in two stages. First, on-site repackaging of the pesticides will be carried out by personnel trained to perform such activities. Afterwards, the unusable substances will be exported outside the country for incineration in specialised incinerators, which do not exist in Bulgaria. The warehouses in which they have been stored so far will themselves have to be decontaminated and rehabilitated. The Ministry of Environment and Water also undertakes to carry out inspections and to ensure the maintenance of the sites and the BB-cubes where plant protection products with expired shelf life are stored.

In March, inspections were carried out by the Regional Inspectorates of Environment and Water (RIEW) and representatives of the municipalities of all warehouses and BB-cubes located near water bodies, as well as of those assessed as high-risk. As a result of the inspections, BB-cubes in the town of Hisarya and the village of Starosel, Ardino Municipality, the village of Markovo, Kaspichan Municipality, the village of Harsovo and others were secured. The condition of the warehouses in the village of Taran, Smolyan Municipality, the village of Telish, Cherven Bryag Municipality, the centralised warehouses in Nikopol and Karlukovo and others has also been improved.

In 2015, Bulgaria signed agreements for the implementation of two new projects under the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme, focused on “Environmentally Sound Disposal of Obsolete Pesticides and Other Plant Protection Products” and “Research and Development of Pilot Models for Collection and Temporary Storage of Hazardous Household Waste”. The agreements were signed by the Deputy Prime Minister for EU Funds and Economic Policy Tomislav Donchev, the Minister of Environment and Water Ivelina Vasileva and the Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation to Bulgaria, H.E. Denis Knobel. The two projects will be implemented until 31 May 2019 by the Ministry of Environment and Water through the Enterprise for Management of Environmental Protection Activities.