

## PRESS RELEASE

Kathmandu, 1 July: In order to prevent people from consuming vegetables laced with excessive amount of pesticides, inter-governmental coordination at the institutional level and awareness amongst the consumers and farmers are essential, according to the experts present at a program held today.

During an interaction programme titled, 'Pesticides Law and its Implementation' —jointly organized by Plant Quarantine and Pesticides Management Centre (PQPMC), Forum for Protection of Consumers' Rights-Nepal and South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE)—participants discussed the new Pesticides Bill which will replace the Pesticides Act 1991.

Moderating the programme Dr Dhrubesh Chandra Regmi, Programme Director, said that this programme was being organized to provide inputs on the regulation and bylaws, which will provide functional clarity to the upcoming legislation. He further added that excessive, improper use and unsound disposal of the pesticides calls for better regulation and implementation.

Making the presentation, Dr. Dilli Ram Sharma, Director-General, PQPMC, pointed out the need for creating awareness on optimal use of pesticides by strengthening agriculture extension services and mobilizing the private sector, as improper handling and disposal of pesticides not only impact consumers' health but is also hazardous to farmers' lives.

He explained that the new Pesticides Bill has tried to address many concerns. 'The Bill has expanded the definition of pesticides; introduced provisions for registration of bio-pesticides, regulations to dispose expired and damaged pesticides and penalty for farmers who use excessive pesticides,' he pointed out.

Similarly, another presenter Mr Jyoti Baniya, Chairperson, Forum for Protection of Consumers' Rights-Nepal talked about the existing issues related to pesticides use and testing. He pointed out that the regulations and bylaws have to provide clarity on coordination among involved government agencies such as the agriculture ministry, customs, commerce ministry, among others. He said that the recent decision of the Government of Nepal to restrict import of fresh vegetables and fruits was made without adequate preparation because the plant quarantine office at custom points are not authorized to conduct pesticides tests.

Urging the need to ensure functional inter-governmental cooperation, Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, Chairman, SAWTEE, seconded Mr. Baniya's argument. He further added that if current mechanism is continued, where all these entities are governed by different authorities and legislations without any coordination, we will not achieve desired results.

Dr. Matina Shrestha, Acting Director, Department of Food Technology and Quality Control (DFTQC) also called attention to inadequate laboratory facility for testing in Nepal. She also informed that DFTQC is working on testing acceptable level of pesticide residues for food items —both fresh and packaged and has already prepared the list of 10 such items which will soon be published in the Gazette to become legally binding.

Mr. Shiva Bhandari, Director, Department of Customs, said that existing institutional mechanism has definitely created functional difficulty when dealing with pesticides related import restrictions. Hopefully, new legislations will clear the confusions as proposed Customs Bill has incorporated many of Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary issues.

Dr. Sunil Bahadur Shrestha, Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST), Vice-Chancellor, also shared that NAST, as Nepal's premier scientific research organization, is willing to support in the endeavour and provide its services, if needed.

Other participants of the programme included officials from concerned department under MoALD, representatives from farmers' associations, wellness experts, consumer and human rights activists, representatives from media, among others. They pointed out the need for equipped laboratories, efficient technical support and effective coordination between government agencies and other stakeholders.