

Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals

Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized
System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals

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Development of guidance on the application of GHS criteria

Guidance on the applicability of the GHS to classification and labelling of pesticides

Note by the secretariat

Introduction

1. Following the adoption of the GHS, several United Nations agencies started work towards GHS implementation through the legislative or recommendatory tools under their responsibility.
2. Since the last updates on GHS implementation provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2006¹ and the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2010², a number of guidelines on pesticide management have been revised and updated to take account of the GHS.
3. The secretariat provides below a brief description of some of the FAO/WHO guidelines relating to pesticide classification and labelling which already include GHS provisions. The list is not exhaustive. Reference to GHS provisions may also be found in other WHO/FAO publications addressing pesticides.

Guidelines on highly hazardous pesticides (2016)

4. The FAO/WHO Joint Meeting on Pesticide Management recommends that highly hazardous pesticides be defined as having one or more of the following characteristics:
 - Criterion 1: Pesticide formulations that meet the criteria of classes Ia or Ib of the WHO Recommended Classification of Pesticides by Hazard; or
 - Criterion 2: Pesticide active ingredients and their formulations that meet the criteria of carcinogenicity Categories 1A and 1B of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS); or
 - Criterion 3: Pesticide active ingredients and their formulations that meet the criteria of mutagenicity Categories 1A and 1B of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS); or

¹ Refer to informal document INF.18 (12th session) and INF.16 (11th session)

² Refer to informal document INF.30 (20th session)

- Criterion 4: Pesticide active ingredients and their formulations that meet the criteria of reproductive toxicity Categories 1A and 1B of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS); or
- Criterion 5: Pesticide active ingredients listed by the Stockholm Convention in its Annexes A and B, and those meeting all the criteria in paragraph 1 of Annex D of the Convention; or
- Criterion 6: Pesticide active ingredients and formulations listed by the Rotterdam Convention in its Annex III; or
- Criterion 7: Pesticides listed under the Montreal Protocol; or
- Criterion 8: Pesticide active ingredients and formulations that have shown a high incidence of severe or irreversible adverse effects on human health or the environment.

5. Therefore, the main recommended references for classification of highly hazardous pesticides as regards acute and chronic toxicity are as follows:

- For acute toxicity (criterion 1 above): “*WHO recommended classification of pesticides by hazard*” (see also paragraphs 12 to 15 below).
- For chronic toxicity (carcinogenicity, mutagenicity and reproductive toxicity): GHS

6. The full text of the guidelines is available at: <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/thematic-sitemap/theme/pests/code/list-guide-new/en/>

Guidelines on good labelling practice for pesticides (2015)

7. The “*Guidelines on Good Labelling Practice for Pesticides*” were first published in 1985.

8. The update published in 2015 aligns the guidelines with the GHS, provides specific options relevant to pesticide labelling on those aspects where the GHS allows for (national) interpretation of its provisions and gives recommendations as to which GHS building blocks are most relevant to pesticide labelling, and how to implement them.

9. The guidelines contain multiple references to the applicability of the GHS to classification (including applicable GHS hazard classes) and labelling of pesticides. They provide examples of labels in single or multiple panels layout, including GHS hazard communication elements as well as an example of a label for small packaging and a separate “fold-out” label.

10. FAO and WHO recommend the progressive adoption of the GHS for classification and labelling of pesticides. Similarly, it is recommended that the contents and layout of the safety data sheets (SDS) that accompany pesticide shipments or consignments follow the provisions of the GHS.

11. The full text of the guidelines is available at: <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/thematic-sitemap/theme/pests/code/list-guide-new/en/>

WHO recommended classification of pesticides by hazard and guidelines to classification (2009)

12. The first edition of the WHO recommended classification of pesticides by hazard was first published in 1975.

13. In 2009, the WHO hazard classes were aligned with the GHS acute toxicity hazard categories for acute oral or dermal toxicity as the starting point for allocating pesticides to a WHO Hazard Class (with adjustments for individual pesticides where required). It is anticipated that few of the more toxic pesticides will change WHO hazard class as a result of this change. As has always been the case, the classification of some pesticides has been adjusted to take account of severe hazards to health other than acute.

14. The document contains two parts:

- **Part I: Overarching principles for the classification of pesticides:** the principles originally proposed in 1975 are now being aligned with the corresponding acute toxicity hazard categories from the GHS.
- **Part II: Guidelines to classification:** Individual products are classified in a series of tables, according to the oral or dermal toxicity of the technical product. The tables are subject to review periodically. This part also provides details of how the WHO Classification has been aligned with the GHS acute toxicity hazard categories.

15. The full text of the WHO recommended classification of pesticides by hazard is available at: http://www.who.int/ipcs/publications/pesticides_hazard/en/
