

Intervention on Chemical Wastes

Peter Denton, from the United Church of Canada, speaking for the Farmers Major Group

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Sustainable agriculture is a topic that crosses many boundaries, as we look for ways to feed an increasing global population.

Sustainable agriculture requires sustainable agricultural communities. We cannot separate environmental, social and economic elements and must consider them together as dynamic and interdependent if we are to achieve sustainability.

Social sustainability for farmers requires political security; economic sufficiency; and local community supports to ensure the passing of knowledge, skills and property from one generation of farmers to the next.

We would therefore observe that the most effective way of managing harmful chemicals in the environment is for them not to be there in the first place.

We would make two points:

First, sustainable agriculture requires us to do the necessary research into sustainable methods and approaches, especially given the complex realities of climate change.

We therefore call on governments to increase public funding for agricultural research in three areas: First, to develop indigenous and local crops to make them resilient in the face of changing climatic conditions, while maintaining control of the seed by local producers; Second, to develop new agricultural technology appropriate to long-term, sustainable agriculture, incorporating both the best practices of new scientific research and the traditional agricultural knowledge of local communities; Third, to enhance extension education services to improve agricultural productivity, resilience and sustainability through the voluntary sharing of knowledge and good practices.

Second, we call for new and more effective approaches to minimizing the risks of novel chemicals and other novel innovations in agriculture by, as the UNEP Foresight Process on Emerging Environment Issues indicates, “working towards a more comprehensive and anticipatory management approach by which the implications of novel technologies and chemicals are systematically and comprehensively assessed before they reach the production phase.” In particular, we call on member states to establish appropriate testing protocols based on the non-monotonic dose responses and lifetime and intergenerational feeding trials as part of new and more effective approaches to minimizing the risks of novel agricultural chemicals.

Finally, we call on government to fully engage and consult Farmers, Indigenous Peoples and their communities, Local Authorities, Workers, Trade Unions, Children and Youth, and Women in the development of policies to minimize the risks of novel agricultural technologies.

Thank you, Madam Chair.