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United Plantations
Malaysia

9. september 2010
J.nr.
Ref. IL
Klima og energiøkonomi

Side 1/1

Ang. Politikens artikel: "Stor dansk virksomhed bruger livsfarlig sprøjtegift"

Der har de sidste to dage verseret en større artikelserie i Politiken vedrørende uansvarlig brug af specielt sprøjtegiften "Paraquat" på United Plantations plantager.

Af artiklerne fremgår det, at der ikke har været korrekt brug af beskyttelses udstyr, samt at United Plantations ikke har ydet den korrekte lægehjælp, når der har været tegn på forgiftninger.

Den danske stat har i mange år haft et godt CDM samarbejde med United Plantations og besøger i den forbindelse jævnligt både oliemøller og plantager. På disse besøg er begreber som bæredygtighed, miljø og arbejdsmiljø blevet diskuteret, og det har været Energistyrelsens vurdering, at det er forhold, som United Plantations har levet op til.

Vi er klar over, at vores CDM projekter ikke direkte vedrører plantagen og United Plantations pesticidpolitik, men i forlængelse af tidligere diskuterede kodeks om bl.a. arbejdsmiljø er vi overraskede over de beskyldninger, som fremføres i Politiken i disse dage og vil bede United Plantations om at redegøre for:

- Hvornår vil Paraquat og Monocrotophos være udfaset af produktionen?
- Er der arbejdere, der er blevet syge af at arbejde med sprøjtegifte og i hvilken grad kontrolleres dette?
- Er der sikkerhedsudstyr til rådighed og kontrolleres det, at det bliver brugt i tilstrækkelig grad?
- Udfører United Plantations undersøgelser relateret til pesticidforgiftning?

Jeg ser frem til en grundig redegørelse snarest muligt.

Med venlig hilsen



Ib Larsen
Direktør

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Svar fra United Plantations

Mr Ib Larsen
Director
Energistyrelsen
Amaliegade 44
1256 Copenhagen K
Denmark

10th September 2010

Dear Ib Larsen

Re: Article in Politiken entitled : Stor Dansk Virksomhed bruger livsfarlig sprøjtegift"

Thank you very for your letter dated 9th September 2010 received today referring to the above mentioned subject, which understandably is of great concern to your selves.

Before proceeding to reply your specific questions I would nevertheless first and foremost like to draw your attention to the rebuttal which United Plantations released on the 9th instant in reply to the very serious allegations made by Politiken through Claus Blok Thomsen. I appeal to you and the other members of Energistyrelsen to kindly read this (see www.unitedplantations.com) .

Since 2006 EnergiStyrelsen has made numerous visits to United Plantations and we have always had one philosophy: to be as transparent and open to your officers as we possibly can.

This continues to be our policy and we will wholeheartedly welcome you or your independent auditors to visit United Plantations to personally investigate any of the allegations made by Politiken.

With respect to your specific questions I have the following comments:

Question 1]

Before answering your question it must be made very clear that United Plantations has at any time never concealed that our operations involved the use of both pesticides Paraquat and Monocrotophos. This must be clear and can also be verified through the RSPO Assessment audits.

On the Company's own initiative it embarked on what was to become the first step to out-phase the use of Paraquat on the 15th of February 2008, less than 8 months after the European Union banned its use. On the 15th of May 2010 the Company made a voluntary decision to phase out Paraquat from its pesticide portfolio before the 1st of January 2011. However, our internal targets are that we may very well achieve this by October 2010.

In connection with Monocrotophos (which is still permitted for use in Spain, Italy, France, Greece and Austria) United Plantations has since 2006 been working on minimising its use and has shown significant reductions year on year since 2006. Our internal target is to phase this out by mid 2011 if not before.

Question 2,3 & 4]

The Company wishes to state that there have been no recorded cases of pesticide poisoning on United Plantations over the last many years. Neither has any of the surrounding clinics reported such cases to the Company or to the Malaysian Authorities (Department of Occupational Safety and Health) who are obliged to be informed of any such incidents, nor from the Labour Office (under the Labour Ministry). We therefore urge any medical Doctor to report any cases to the Authorities originating from United Plantations. So far United Plantations has today received no less than 8 written letters from the medical clinics around its plantations who all state that there have been no cases of pesticide poisoning treated at their clinics originating from employees of United Plantations.

United Plantations has always been very transparent about its usage of pesticides. The total active ingredient usage has been a familiar feature in its annual report for years. The publicly available documents as per the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) will also testify to this. In this connection it is important to bring to your attention that the RSPO's accredited independent auditor who audited United Plantations amongst others for its use and safe handling of pesticides reverted that good controls were in place. These documents are public knowledge.

In addition strong emphasis is also directed towards implementing high standards of safety to all its employees, especially those exposed to pesticides. This, amongst others, include the following:

- 1] All new employees at United Plantations handling pesticides, particularly Paraquat, are given proper training based on detailed standard operating procedures including the use of proper personal protective equipment (PPE), in addition, retraining of all workers is routinely carried to ensure safety measures are correctly implemented.

However, in spite of the rules and regulations on the use of personal protective equipment and the safe use of pesticides Management cannot deny that there are incidents, of employees who take off some of some of their safety gear when Management or supervisors are not around. If this is found to be true, then harsh warnings are issued.

All this is documented and promulgated internally in the company's HIRARC manual. (Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Risk Control).

- 2] PPE are issued and records maintained to substantiate this. The Malaysian authorities Department of Safety and Health (DOSH) visits each of United Plantations estates at least once a year to audit whether the Company's practices and routines have been rigorously applied.

All this is documented.

- 3] Every 1-2 months medical examinations are carried out on all employees handling pesticides in order to determine their continuing fitness. Since 2005, the Company has conducted nearly 12,000 of such medical examinations. These examinations are undertaken by a qualified Hospital Assistant and a Doctor of medicine. The medical examination covers the nose, ears, skin, eye, nails, lungs, weight gain/loss and blood pressure.

On no occasions, over the last 5 years, has the Company experienced cases of Paraquat poisoning. In the event of incidental cases of allergic reactions to the use of rubber gloves following such investigations, affected workers are assigned elsewhere.

All this is documented.

- 4] In addition to the above, United Plantations has since 2008 embarked on a programme involving an Occupational Medical Surveillance examination of a random selection of chemical sprayers and handlers from the various estates within the Company. From 2010 this has been extended to all sprayers. This is both a requisite of the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil as well as under the Use and Standard of Exposure of Chemicals Hazardous to Health (USECHH) regulation issued in 2000 by Malaysian Department of Occupational Safety and Health.

This examination encompasses detailed medical and occupational history, personal habits, chemicals used, full medical examination and laboratory

investigations inclusive of hematology, renal and liver functions tests, chest x-rays, and more importantly for pesticide sprayers, the biological monitoring of the absorption of organophosphate pesticides in the form of plasma cholinesterase. This year alone almost 30% of the Company's employees assigned to the application of pesticides have been examined. None of these examinations have identified any abnormality in any of United Plantations' employees due to exposure to organophosphates or Paraquat and other chemicals applied in the course of their work.

All this is documented.

Feel free to contact me anytime if you wish for any of the before mentioned to be. I can be reached at +6056411 411 or on my hand phone +6019 555 3777

Thank you

Kind regards

Yours sincerely
United Plantations Bhd

Carl Bek-Nielsen
Executive Director