



International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides

Guidelines on pesticide advertising



**World Health
Organization**



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Abbreviations

CD	compact disc
DVD	digital versatile disc or digital video disc
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce World Business Organisation
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IVM	Integrated Vector Management
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organization

Definitions

Active ingredient means the biologically active part of the pesticide.¹

Advertising means the promotion of the sale and use of pesticides by printed and electronic media, signs, displays, gift, demonstration or word of mouth.¹

Direct marketing means the practice of delivering promotional messages directly to potential customers on an individual basis as opposed to through a mass medium.

Integrated pest management (IPM) means the careful consideration of all available pest control techniques and subsequent integration of appropriate measures that discourage the development of pest populations and keep pesticides and other interventions to levels that are economically justified and reduce or minimize risks to human health and the environment. IPM emphasizes the growth of a healthy crop with the least possible disruption to agro-ecosystems and encourages natural pest control mechanisms.¹

Integrated vector management (IVM) is a rational decision-making process for the optimal use of resources for vector control.²

Pest means an organism that will or may cause unacceptable damage to a crop or stored product or threaten the health of humans or animals, and which is a target for a treatment with a plant protection, public health or domestic product, including, among others, insects, mites, nematodes, diseases, weeds, rodents or birds.

Pesticide means any substance, or mixture of substances, or microorganisms including viruses, intended for repelling, destroying or controlling any pest, including vectors of human or animal disease, nuisance pests, unwanted species of plants or animals causing harm during or otherwise interfering with the production, processing, storage, transport or marketing of food, agricultural commodities, wood and wood products or animal feeding stuffs, or which may be administered to animals for the control of insects, arachnids or other pests in or on their bodies. The term includes substances intended for use as insect or plant growth regulators; defoliants; desiccants; agents for setting, thinning or preventing the premature fall of fruit; and substances applied to crops either before or after harvest to protect the commodity from deterioration during storage and transport. The term also includes pesticide synergists and safeners, where they are integral to the satisfactory performance of the pesticide.³

Product (or pesticide product) means the pesticide active ingredient(s) and other components, in the form in which it is packaged and sold.¹

Registration means the process whereby the responsible national government or regional authority approves the sale and use of a pesticide following the evaluation of comprehensive scientific data demonstrating that the product is effective for the intended purposes and does not pose an unacceptable risk to human or animal health or the environment.¹

¹ International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides (1).

² WHO position statement on integrated vector management (2).

³ Manual on development and use of FAO and WHO specifications for pesticides (3).

Guidelines on pesticide advertising

1. Introduction

Advertising is the promotion of the sale and use of pesticides by printed and electronic media, signs, displays, gift, demonstration or word of mouth [1]. It is a powerful means of influencing purchasing decisions and building recognition of or loyalty for a brand or product name. When promoting pesticides, it is important to present accurate product information and emphasize the importance of user competence. Advertising guidance is set out in Article 11 of the *International code of conduct on the distribution and use of pesticides* [1]¹ (hereinafter referred to as the Code of Conduct) (see Annex 1). The pesticide industry is called upon to adhere to these standards, particularly in countries lacking appropriate legislation and advisory services, and governments are urged to put in place appropriate regulations or legislation to enforce advertising standards.

Advertising takes many different forms, and these guidelines provide details of current expectations and best practice with respect to standards. They are intended to cover pesticide advertising in relation to all uses, applications and services (including agriculture, public health, forestry, storehouse, home and garden, pest control operators, construction, etc.), following the definition of pesticide contained in the Code of Conduct.

These guidelines aim to:

- provide information for governments and the pesticide industry to supplement Article 11 (Advertising) of the Code of Conduct, considering both self-regulation and statutory measures, in order to ensure compliance and best practice;
- suggest a framework for monitoring pesticide advertisements, and indicate steps to take when encountering non-compliance with national legislation or non-observance of the Code of Conduct;
- recommend best advertising practices, in order to ensure observance of the Code of Conduct and compliance with relevant national legislation.

These guidelines are aimed principally at government bodies responsible for regulating pesticide distribution and sales, and trading standards, in agriculture, public health and other pesticide use situations. They are advisory and aim not to create conflicts with existing laws and regulations.

The guidelines will also provide directions for the pesticide industry, trade associations, those developing advertising or other promotional material for pesticide products, public interest organizations monitoring pesticide sales and distribution, and other interested parties.

¹ The International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides (revised version) was adopted by the 123rd Session of the FAO Council in November 2002.

2. What is an advertisement?

The Code of Conduct defines advertising as "... the promotion of the sale and use of pesticides by printed and electronic media, signs, displays, gift, demonstration or word of mouth." The term "advertisement" covers any form of advertising for goods or services, regardless of the medium used [4].

Pesticide advertising is a communication aimed at promoting or selling a product or range of products, which is targeted at those with an interest or potential interest in the sale, supply, purchase or use of pesticides, including the general public. It is addressed to wholesalers, retailers, farmers, growers, public health authorities, amenity pesticide users, trade customers, and individuals targeted for home and garden use. It is likely to carry a product name and possibly a company logo.

An advertisement is issued, or paid for, by the company or organization manufacturing, selling, distributing or promoting the product, and the purpose is to create, increase or reinforce a market share for the product with an anticipated financial gain.

The term advertisement does not refer to the product label, a safety data sheet, an independent publication, internal company communications, a report of trials and experiments published in scientific literature, and similar factual publications.

Products and services may be advertised in many different forms and styles, and the advertisements may be placed in a range of different media, including:

- (a) print-based advertisements in papers, journals, newspapers, specialized agricultural publications, magazines, scientific journals, leaflets;
- (b) billboards, posters and notices by the roadside, on the side of shops and buildings, or aerial announcements;
- (c) advertorials, the term used for paid space in a newspaper or journal that promotes a product or viewpoint;
- (d) radio and television advertisements;
- (e) videos, digital versatile discs (DVDs) circulated or available on line;
- (f) web sites and other use of the Internet;
- (g) promotional offers such as sweepstakes, lotteries or entry into a prize draw, competitions, awarding of points to offset against future purchases, and any other promotional incentives or gifts that encourage the purchase of pesticides;
- (h) sponsorship of special promotional events, trade exhibitions or fairs;
- (i) messages on clothing or free gifts, such as t-shirts, hats, pens;
- (j) e-mails and direct marketing.

3. Standards, compliance and regulation

All advertising should be legal, decent, honest and truthful [4]. All advertisements should comply with the requirements of any applicable legislation and adhere to any other applicable standards. They should not appear to approve or encourage actions that contravene or infringe national laws and regulations, or non-observance of standards or self-regulatory codes, and they should follow generally accepted standards of environmentally responsible behaviour.

The purpose of regulations and standards are to ensure that information in advertisements is conveyed correctly and fairly, is not misleading, and that use instructions are communicated appropriately. These guidelines focus both on voluntary standards or codes of practice (in chapters 4 and 6) and legally binding national legislation on advertising (in chapter 5).

4. International and national voluntary standards

The Code of Conduct is the main international voluntary standard that should be referred to for best practice in pesticide advertising [1]. General standards for advertising have furthermore been set by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) in its Consolidated Code on Advertising and Marketing Communication Practice (the ICC Code) [4]. The ICC Code promotes a number of general principles that marketers and advertisers should adhere to in their advertising and marketing communications. It also contains a section on environmental claims in marketing communication. Similarly, voluntary national advertising standards may also be applicable (see, for example, [5] and [6]).

It should be noted, however, that the provisions of the Code of Conduct are specific to pesticides and should be seen as minimum requirements for pesticide-related advertising. Other international standards, such as the ICC Code, provide valuable additional guidance for advertising, but care should be taken that, as far as pesticide advertising is concerned, they do not contradict or weaken the minimum provisions agreed on by all relevant stakeholders in the Code of Conduct. The requirements for advertising pesticides, which are supported by the pesticide industry, as set out in the Article 11 of the Code of Conduct (see Annex 1 for full text) and elsewhere, can be divided into messages that may be included and messages that should be avoided in advertisements:

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