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Pesticide use on vegetables cultivated within the humid tropic zones of Cameroon**Nambangia Justin Okolle**

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In Cameroon, vegetables are commonly and frequently consumed together with carbohydrate staples such as plantains, rice, cassava, potatoes, maize and yams. With the increasing importance of vegetables for food and income, more farmers are cultivating more vegetables. A scoping study was carried out in three agro-ecological zones with aim to record different vegetables, pests, crop protection practices and possible health effects. Most respondents (41.86%) were above 45 years of age. About 85% have never attended any workshop or training on vegetables. Of the 15 vegetables recorded in all the zones, more than 60% were traditional African vegetables with the most cultivated one being African nightshade, pepper and amaranth. Major biotic constraints were insects, fungi and molluscs. Vegetable loss estimates could be up to 75% with main signs/symptoms resulting of damage as skeletonize leaves, leaf curling, holes on leaves and leaves rot. The most commonly applied was the use of pesticides (mainly insecticides and fungicides) especially on huckleberry, tomato, pepper and green. Of the 61 agrochemicals recorded, 23 were insecticides, 27 were fungicides, 8 were fertilizers, 2 were herbicides and 1 was a botanical (wood ash). Farmers still use pesticides that have been banned, expired or not registered. Such pesticides include malathion, methyl parathion and carbofuran. Health effects recorded were skin irritation watery eyes, vomiting and nausea. Bad practices included keeping drinking water in pesticide containers, keeping pesticides in bed rooms, kitchens, food stores as well as in other household containers. In conclusion, women are more exposed to pesticide risks. Protection of vegetables from biotic constraints is done mainly by application of pesticides and this is accompanied with bad practices and acute toxicities. Even though there are laws guiding use of agrochemicals especially pesticides, enforcement of these laws seems to be weak or non-existence.

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