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Pesticides are one of top three 'worst toxic pollution problems' on planet, say non-profit groups

by Jonathan Benson, staff writer

(NaturalNews) The Blacksmith Institute (BI), an international non-profit environmental health organization devoted to solving pollution problems around the world, in conjunction with Green Cross Switzerland (GCS), a group that helps clean up pollution, recently co-released a comprehensive report entitled *The World's Worst Toxic Pollution Problems*. In it, researchers explain how agricultural pesticides represent the number three worst pollution problem on the planet.

The report was compiled based on data collected over a three year period from thousands of toxic "hotspots" around the world, all of which were in low- and middle-income countries. The team that compiled the report primarily analyzed how various pollutants affect local people groups rather than the world at large, which means the negative effects of these pollutants are far worse on a global scale.

The team also focused on what it calls the "most relevant and urgent" pollutants in terms of toxicity and negative impact. These included heavy metals, radionuclides, poly-aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), fluorides, asbestos, cyanides, and persistent organic pollutants (POPs) such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and pesticides.

After crunching the numbers, the team found that mercury pollution from gold mining and lead pollution from industrial parks are the top two worst world polluters, affecting 3.5 million and nearly 3 million local people, respectively. But taking the third-place spot was agricultural pesticides, which were found to negatively affect more than 2.2 million local people.

The report makes very clear that pesticide pollution was only calculated in terms of "local impact" in poorer areas which, again, is far short of their actual global impact. The World Resources Institute

(WRI) has reported that nearly 75 percent of pesticide use occurs in developed countries, and primarily in North America, Western Europe and Japan -- but none of these places were included in the BI / GCS assessment (<http://www.wri.org/publication/cont...>).

If the report had been calculated on a global scale in all areas where pesticides are used, the number of those affected by them in one way or another would likely have calculated in the billions. Not only are farmers who use pesticides and those who live around their farms exposed, but so are those who incur contaminated runoff downstream. Then, there are the millions of people globally that consume pesticide-tainted produce.

To learn more, you can access the entire BI / GCS report at:
<http://www.worstpolluted.org/2011-r...>

Sources for this article include:

<http://www.worstpolluted.org/2011-p...>

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/a...>