

Geography of the Use of Agrochemicals in Brazil and Connections with the European Union

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The Agrarian Geography from the University of Sao Paulo (USP), attempts to assassinate modern agronomy in Brazil, using as a weapon the controversial theme from the pesticides. In order to command this tragic operation, an "Atlas" was created.

Entitled as "Geography of the Use of Agrochemicals in Brazil and Connections with the European Union", the work seeks to show the evil side from the agronomists against the people. Together with the farmers and articulated with the multinational companies, they decided to poison the world.

Who testify that is Prof. Larissa Bombardi, author of the appalling text, released a few days ago, with a fuss, abroad. Relentlessly, she fires her machine gun against agribusiness, commodity production, ethanol, eucalyptus, everything. Against agrarian capitalism.

The USP geographer imputed to pesticides the incarnation of evil on Earth. Such as in a fable she has the traditional peasant production, seen as the bliss in the field. Pure bucolic.

It shows a contempt for scientific advancement. Worse. The Atlas promotes a falsification of history. Professor Larissa deforms the reality of agriculture, to endorse her retrograde fantasy.

The heart of the story is the difference between the agrochemicals used in Europe from those used in Brazil. According to the Atlas, there are 150 active principles which are banished there, and used extensively here in agricultural production. It would be sad if it were not false.

Of the feared list, 40 products have only a monograph, a description of their technical characteristics, published in Brazil, by Anvisa. This means that it is a lie to say that they are released for agricultural use, since they are not even registered in Brazil.

Another 40 active ingredients, listed in the macabre Atlas list, are not even pesticides. They represent household cleaning products (boric acid, for example), fumigants, pheromones, biological agents, wood preservatives. Non-agricultural uses.

Another 9 chemicals, used here in phytosanitary management, could not be "banned" in Europe because they were never submitted for registration. This is the case of sulfentrazone and chlorimuron.

Such herbicides, especially applied in citrus and coffee cultivation, are needed to control invasive weeds in tropical conditions, as in Brazil, but are not required in temperate EU countries, who produce just a little amount orange or coffee.

This is the fundamental question for agronomy. There is no indication that farms that are so different in ecological terms have the same technological recipe for agricultural pest control. Brazil can perfectly use agrochemicals not recommended in Europe. And vice versa.

Reverse the reasoning: in Portugal, there are 23 pesticides registered for olive cultivation. In Brazil, only 3 are allowed in the treatment of pests and diseases of olive trees. Would European olives be clogged with poisons?

No. From a toxicological or environmental point of view, this difference means absolutely nothing. The immense Mediterranean olive groves require proper conditions of phytosanitary control. They do not compare with the small orchards of Brazil.

The Atlas list does, however, contain some of the active principles that were banned in Europe, keeping here your record. It goes without saying that not only Brazil uses them, but also Australia, the US, Argentina, Canada, Japan. Are these countries also causing global intoxication by pesticides?

European standards have been questioned worldwide. The US, Brazil and 14 other countries have requested the opening of a Panel of WTO disputes aimed at unification of the methodology for the analysis and registration of agrochemicals. The significant divergence lies in the concepts of "risk" or "danger".

Preferred in European control bodies, danger is an inherent property of the chemical elements, and indicates its toxic "potential". In the USA and other countries, the risk is adopted, measured by the exposure of living organisms to dangerous substances.

It is valid for pesticides and for medicines. Certain molecules can be dangerous, but depending on the exposure - and the dose - do not cause risks to human health. Just check the label on a bottle of mineral water. It indicates sulfates and nitrates, but in such insignificant amounts that does not cause risks. They are even useful for health.

This is the essential principle of scientific experimentation that seeks to determine the toxicity of pesticides. Laboratory tests are taken to the field, determining the acceptable limits, which must compose the monographs, and eventually, the public registry of the substances.

Nothing is walking backwards. All countries have banned agrochemicals that have proved problematic in agricultural use. In Brazil, this practice began in 1975, when the mercurials were eliminated; 10 years later, DDT and BHC were also banned.

In the last decade the following active principles have been banned in Brazil: Endosulfan, Cyhexatin, Tricloform, Monocrotophos, Pentachlorophenol, Lindane, Metamidofós, Parationa Methyl and Prochloraz. Nothing has been worsened the agenda of national plant health.

There are problems, there will always be. The professional rigor demanded on the field application of agrochemicals is not always verified. So, there are cases of rural workers intoxications. How big is the problem?

In the historical series (1985/2016), approximately 1,750,000 general cases of intoxication were reported to the National Drug Information System (SINITOX), of the Brazilian Ministry of Health. Of these, 29.1% were caused by drugs, 22% by venomous animals, 9.8% by household products and 6.1% by phytosanitary products (pesticides).

There were 3,967 deaths - an annual average of 128 - derived from poisoning of pesticides. Suicides were responsible for 84.5%

of these deaths. Commonly, due to ingestion of rodenticides. In the cities.

Those are the numbers. Facing it and judging them modest, Professor Larissa preferred to raise them by 50 times. That's it. Arguing to be noticeable underreporting, she created a multiplier of reality.

Conclusion

Agrochemicals are dangerous when misused. Used according to agronomic prescription, they are safe. But scientific knowledge evolves. An active principle judged good in the past can be lousy in the present. And new discoveries revolutionize agricultural technology for the better.

Farmers do not use pesticides for evil, but due out of necessity. If they could, they would stop buying them, because they are expensive. To judge them puppets of the multinationals means to consider them imbeciles.

Do not kill modern agronomy with a fetish.

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