VEGETABLE FARMERS’ KNOWLEDGE AND SAFETY PRACTICES TOWARDS PESTICIDES: RESULTS FROM FIELD OBSERVATION IN SOUTHEASTERN DR CONGO

Arsene Mushagalusa
Balasha
Joseph Seveno Houndehin
Maurice Kesonga Nsele
Nathan Kasanda Mukendi
Jules Nkulu Mwine Fyama
Diakalia Son

Department of Agricultural Economics, Faculty of Agronomy, University of Lubumbashi, Lubumbashi, DR Congo.

Faculty of Agronomy, University of Parakou, Parakou, Benin.

Agrosystèmes et Ingénierie de l’Environnement (Sy.N.A.I.E), Unité Sante des Plantes du Laboratoire Systèmes Naturels, Institut du Développement Rural (IDR), Université Nazi Boni (UNB), Burkina Faso.

ABSTRACT

Plant protection products can cause serious health issues especially for farmers who are exposed to all steps of their use. We used field observation to assess farmers’ knowledge of pesticides as well as their behavior while preparing mixtures, spraying and rinsing equipment used. Results showed that most of the farmers (97.6%) used pesticides (organophosphate and pyrethroid insecticides) and reported having both positive and negative perception of pesticides apprehended respectively in terms of benefits (improve crop quality) and hazards (source of diseases, poison for human). Farmers’ knowledge of meteorological parameters and personal protective equipment for successful and safe use of pesticides was still limited. Farmers observed (98%) did not wear personal protective equipment (gloves, mask, coverall) during all steps of pesticide use (mixing, spraying, rinsing equipment). Hygienic practices were also very poor since 100% of farmers monitored could not change the clothes worn during the crop treatment. Furthermore, 88% of the farmers observed did not wash hands, feet and legs immediately after pesticide application whereas those parts of the body were particularly exposed during the treatment. This study provides reliable evidence related to the hazardous use of pesticides in Lubumbashi. A program of awareness and information will help to relieve farmers from pesticides health risks.

Contribution/Originality: This study is one of the very few studies which have investigated the misuse of pesticides in Lubumbashi. Results highlighted poor handling practices of pesticides by farmers and limited knowledge of protective equipment and weather conditions while using plant protection products.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, 16,000 small farmers are involved in urban and periurban horticulture and grow 150,000 tons of fresh vegetables per year for 11.5 million urban residents [1]. Parallel to that production, there is simultaneously a development of the informal market of agricultural inputs including synthetic pesticides. Pesticides are widely used in agricultural production to control pests, diseases, weeds in an effort to reduce yield losses and maintain high product quality [2, 3]. A recent survey conducted in Lubumbashi reported that 97.6% of vegetable farmers spray pyrethroid and organophosphate insecticides because of their effectiveness and immediate action on pests [4]. Despite their perceived benefits, misuse and poor handling practices of pesticides can lead to serious health issues arising from the exposure while mixing, spraying pesticides and working in treated fields [5–8]. For many farmers, the situation has been exacerbated because of the lack of protective equipment, the use of...
inappropriate spraying equipment, pesticide application during bad weather conditions (strong winds or high temperature, low humidity) [9, 10] and the improper combination of several chemicals [11-13]. In many countries like DR Congo, sale agents who are the main source of information for farmers on pesticide choice and use [5, 14] have also limited knowledge of plant protection products and are not trained to handle safely chemicals [15]. Furthermore, the language barrier is another challenge for farmers and pesticide retailers since they cannot understand pesticide label instructions written generally in foreign languages (English, Chinese) [15]. Research conducted in Tanzania showed that pesticide distribution accompanied by unsafe practices can contribute to the burden from acute pesticide poisoning, not only affecting the distributors but also farmers who buy and use these products [16]. Farmers knowledge and safety practices have been studied in many countries like Ghana, Indonesia and Nepal where it has been proved that farmers know the importance of using personal protective equipment such as hats, masks, glasses, boots, and gloves [11, 17, 18]. However, poverty, strong heat and negligence (low perception of the risks) are cited among the factors preventing farmers to use protective equipment [19, 20].

According to Maria, et al. [17]; Vaidya, et al. [21] the possible strategy of relieving farmers from the health risks associated with pesticide exposure is to deploy a program of awareness and information. In Lubumbashi, last decade a large project of urban and periurban horticulture has promoted a couple of Integrated Pest Management techniques to minimize the use of chemical inputs by the farmers but its adoption has been low [4]. This study was initiated to assess farmers' knowledge of pesticides as well as their safety practices while spraying pesticides on vegetable crops in periurban areas of Lubumbashi, DR Congo. This research focused on the meteorological factors, the use personal protective equipment as well as the farmers 'behaviour while and after pesticide application. Information gained in this study is valuable and can be used by policy makers, agricultural extension officers as well as scientists to design a suitable program of information on safe use, storing and handling of pesticides.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1. Study Area

This study was conducted in the city of Lubumbashi located between 11° 27'and 11° 47' S and between 27° 19' and 27° 40' E in the southeastern Democratic Republic of Congo [22]. It is the second largest city in DR Congo and one of the fastest growing African cities with annual population growth rate of 5% [23]. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of United Nations [24] estimated 2 097 000 habitants in Lubumbashi. Human pressure and competition on resources (land, forest) have been reported [23, 25]. Periurban agriculture is an important activity for many poor dwellers in that city where the rate of unemployment is important [26, 27]. Between 2002 and 2010, the area dedicated to urban and periurban agriculture has passed from 100 up to 725 hectares and that situation has led to the creation of several production sites [1]. The vegetable production sites investigated were Kimilolo (11° 43'007 " S, 27° 25'66"E) ; Kilobelobe (11° 40'306 " S, 27° 30'974 " E), Maendeleo(11° 42'615 " S, 27° 28'433 " E), Naviundu (11° 37'825" S, 27° 31'266 " E) and Tingi-Tingi (11° 36'540 " S, 27° 28'433 " E). The study area benefit of humid subtropical climate (Cw type of the Köppen classification system with one rainy season (November-March) and one dry season (May-September), separated by October and April as transitional months [22]. The mean annual temperature is 20 °C; the warmest month is October (23 °C) and the coolest is July with 15.6 °C [28].

2.2. Data Collection

To assess farmers’ knowledge and safety practices towards pesticides, data were collected in two rounds. First, 246 vegetable farmers were randomly interviewed using a questionnaire. Data collected at the first round were relative to the gender, education, land access, farm sizes, training, and perception of pesticide, use pattern, re-entry and pre-harvest periods). Secondly, from March to June 2017, a random sample of 50 vegetable farmers was drawn from the list of 246 vegetable farmers previously interviewed. Selected farmers were monitored in order to obtain
comprehensive information on their attitudes and safety practices while mixing, spraying and after working. Field observations are important while monitoring farmers’ practices and use of protective equipment [3, 29]. In addition, observations help to understand farmers’ knowledge, attitudes and their safety practices [11, 18, 30]. To assess hygienic practices, we observed whether farmers washed hands and feet, changed the clothes worn during spraying or took bath immediately after pesticide application [31]. We focused also on negligent behavior like eating and smoking during the application as well as the presence of people without personal protection equipment around the treated farms.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using frequencies and percentages for the variables examined. The means and standard deviations were also calculated (farmer’s age and farming experience). The Chi-square test ($\chi^2$-test) was used to investigate the significant associations or difference between farmers’ profile (Gender, age, experience in farming, land size, training) and pesticide use practices. The criterion for statistical significance used in this study was $\alpha <0.05$.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Farmers’ Socioeconomic Characteristics

The socioeconomic characteristics of the sample of farmers are given in Table 1. More than half (52%) of vegetable farmers were young male who were considering the vegetable production as part of their employment. The average age of the respondents was 40±12 years with an experience of 9 years in vegetable production. A large part of farmers (63%) attended high school and cultivated small plots of 3.6 ares to grow vegetables (Chinese cabbage, amaranth). Almost of the farmers (97.6%) used insecticides to control pests.

| Variables          | Category     | Number of farmers | Percentage (%) | Mean ±SD |
|--------------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|---------|
| Gender%            | Male         | 128               | 52             | ---     |
|                    | Female       | 118               | 48             | ---     |
| Age (years)        | 246          | ---               | 40±12          | ---     |
| Education          | Primary      | 54                | 21             | ---     |
|                    | High school  | 155               | 63             | ---     |
|                    | University   | 34                | 14             | ---     |
| Farmer’s experience| 246          | ---               | 9±7            | ---     |
| Farms’ size (ares) | 246          | ---               | 3.6±2.4        | ---     |
| Pesticide use (yes) | 240        | 97.6              | ---            | ---     |

Note: SD represents Standard deviation.

3.2. Pesticide Use Pattern and Farmers’ Perceptions

Results indicated that a good part of farmers mixed two insecticides in belief that the effect will be great. However, the chi-square test did not show significant association between farmers (female and male) regarding the use pattern of pesticides ($p > 0.05$) as reported in Table 2. Most of the farmers (72.2%) used only one pesticide whereas 22.8% combined two different products. In fact, farmers had both positive and negative perception of pesticides that can be apprehended in terms of the benefits and hazards Table 3.

| Gender | Use only one | Mixing two pesticides | p-value |
|--------|--------------|------------------------|---------|
|        | Frequency    | Percentage             | Frequency | Percentage |         |
| Male   | 96           | 75.0                   | 32       | 25.0       | 0.384 ns|
| Female | 94           | 79.7                   | 24       | 20.3       |         |
| Total  | 190          | 72.2                   | 56       | 22.8       |         |

Note: ns means no significant.
Table 3. Farmer’s perception of synthetic pesticides.

| Gender | Positive perceptions | Negative perceptions |
|--------|----------------------|----------------------|
|        | Effective to control pests | Improve crop quality | Destroy non target | Source of diseases | Poison | Don’t know |
|        | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Female | 114 | 96.6 | 105 | 89.0 | 6 | 5.1 | 38 | 32.2 | 65 | 55.1 | 9 | 7.6 |
| Male   | 124 | 97.0 | 116 | 90.6 | 4 | 3.0 | 46 | 36.0 | 74 | 58.7 | 4 | 3.1 |

p-value | 0.407 ns | 0.352 ns

Note: *n= number of farmers, ns: no significant.
Source: Survey, 2016.

3.3. Farmers’ Knowledge of Critical Stage of Pesticides Use

Farmers were asked to indicate the most dangerous step during pesticide application process. Result show that there were no significant differences (p>0.05) between farmers’ profile and the three steps of using pesticide including the preparation of mixture, spraying and rinsing the equipment used Table 4.

Table 4. Farmers’ profile and knowledge of critical step while handling pesticide.

| Variables | All stages | Mixture | Spraying | Rinsing | P-value |
|-----------|------------|---------|----------|---------|---------|
|           | n* | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Gender    |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |
| Male      | 8  | 27.6 | 7  | 24.1 | 14 | 48.3 | 0  | 0.0 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Female    | 4  | 19.0 | 4  | 19.0 | 13 | 41.9 | 0  | 0.0 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Age (years) |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |
| 17-30     | 5  | 29.4 | 2  | 11.8 | 10 | 58.8 | 0  | 0.0 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 31-49     | 5  | 22.7 | 7  | 31.8 | 10 | 45.5 | 0  | 0.0 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| >50       | 2  | 18.2 | 2  | 18.2 | 7  | 63.6 | 0  | 0.0 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Experience (years) |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |
| 1-5       | 11 | 32.4 | 8  | 23.5 | 15 | 44.1 | 0  | 0.0 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 6-10      | 1  | 12.5 | 1  | 12.5 | 6  | 75.0 | 0  | 0.0 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 11-19     | 0  | 0.0  | 1  | 25.0 | 3  | 75.0 | 0  | 0.0 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| >20       | 0  | 0.0  | 1  | 25.0 | 3  | 75.0 | 0  | 0.0 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Training  |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |
| Yes       | 3  | 15.8 | 4  | 21.1 | 12 | 63.2 | 0  | 0.0 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| No        | 9  | 29.0 | 7  | 22.6 | 15 | 48.4 | 0  | 0.0 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |

p-value | 0.627 ns | 0.595 ns | 0.461 ns | 0.509 ns

Note: *n= number of farmers, ns: no significant.
Source: Survey, 2017.

A good part among respondent male (48.3%) and female (61.9%), young (58.8%) and aged farmers (63.6%) either those who attended previously farming trainings (63.2%), all attested that pesticides were more risky and hazardous while spraying. Few among male (24.1%) as well as female (19%) knew that the most dangerous operation was the preparation of the mixture because the product handled is still concentrated and can be more hazardous. None among farmers knew that while rinsing the equipment (knapsack sprayers, buckets) the risk of contamination was still important. The Figure 1 illustrates the way farmers handle chemical pesticides when they estimate the dose and prepare the mixtures.

Figure 1. Photos illustrating unsafe practices among farmers during dose determination (left) and mixing (right) without protective equipment, site Kimilolo, Lubumbashi May, 2017.
Source: Field observation, 2017.
3.4. Farmers’ Knowledge of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The informations about farmers’ knowledge of personal protective equipment are presented in Table 5. The majority of farmers (62%) cited long clothes (pants and shirt long sleeve) and hate as the necessary PPE during pesticide application and 30% mentioned mask and gloves. Only few of farmers (10%) have good knowledge of the complete PPE (mask, gloves, hate, coverall, boots and glasses). However, 22% of farmers did not know any protective equipment and reported not paying attention on PPE.

| Protective Equipment          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Mask and gloves              | 15        | 30             |
| Coverall and gloves          | 7         | 14             |
| Gloves and boots             | 4         | 8              |
| Glasses and gloves           | 4         | 8              |
| Long clothes and hate        | 31        | 62             |
| All PPE                      | 5         | 10             |
| Do not know                  | 11        | 22             |

Table 5. Farmers’ knowledge of personal protective equipment.

Source: Field observation, 2017.

3.5. Assessment of Farmers’ Safety Practices

Safe practices during pesticide application are important to minimize farmers’ vulnerability to pesticides. However, only 2% of vegetable farmers observed put on gloves, masks, glasses and coverall while preparing mixture and spraying pesticides. More than half of farmers (54%) put on long clothes (pant and shirt with long sleeves) during mixture and 70% while spraying and rinsing the material used Table 6.

| Operations | Gloves n (%) | Masks n (%) | Boots n (%) | Coverall N (%) | Hate n (%) | Glasses n (%) | Long clothes n (%) |
|------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Mixture    | 1(2)         | 1(2)        | 11(22)      | 1(2)           | 4(8)       | 1(2)          | 27(54)            |
| Spraying   | 1(2)         | 1(2)        | 11(22)      | 1(2)           | 4(8)       | 1(2)          | 35(70)            |
| Rinsing    | 0(0)         | 0(0)        | 11(22)      | 1(2)           | 4(8)       | 0(0)          | 35(70)            |

Note: *number of farmers.
Source: Field observation, 2017.

3.6. Farmers’ Knowledge of Meteorological Parameters

The weather conditions observed by farmers before spraying pesticide on vegetable crops are shown in Table 7. Results reveal that only 40% of farmers could not spray during windy or rainy time or when the temperature was high. A high portion of farmers (30%) did not know any meteorological factor.

| Parameters                  | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| None                        | 15        | 30             |
| Temperature and sunlight    | 8         | 16             |
| Wind and rain               | 5         | 10             |
| Wind only                   | 17        | 34             |
| Rain only                   | 5         | 10             |
| All parameters              | 20        | 40             |

Source: Survey, 2017.

3.7. Farmers’ Attitudes during and after Applying Pesticides

All Farmers observed have demonstrated some inappropriate and unsafe practices either during or after pesticide use Table 8.
Table 8. Farmers’ attitudes during and after applying pesticides.

| Observations                                    | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Applicator does not change clothes after pesticide application | 50        | 100.0      |
| Applicator does not wash hands and feet         | 44        | 88.0       |
| Applicator smokes while spraying                 | 1         | 2.0        |
| People are around the field being sprayed        | 45        | 90.0       |
| Applicator keeps working in the treated field    | 28        | 56.0       |
| Applicator is being assisted by a fellow without PPE | 16        | 32.0       |
| Applicator fixes sprayer full of mixture while spraying | 3         | 6.0        |
| Applicator rinses the spraying material in the water point | 6         | 12.0       |
| Applicator leaves the empty pesticide containers on field | 43        | 86.4       |

Source: Field observation, 2017.

All farmers observed (100%) did not change the clothes worn during pesticide application and 88% did not wash their hands and legs just after spraying. Two (2%) were smoking while spraying and surprisingly 56% kept working and walking in the treated field. Most of the farmers (90%) sprayed pesticides while people (family members, fellow farmers) were around the farms and some of them could be asked to assist the applicator (32%) to lift, load knapsack sprayers or provide any assistance. After spraying, 12% applicators were rinsing equipment (knapsack sprayers, bucket) in any water point or river closer to the farms whereby generally harvested vegetables were also washed before they were taken to the local markets. We noticed that 86.4% of farmers left empty containers of pesticide in their fields.

3.8. Re-Entry Interval Observed by Vegetable Farmers

The re-entry interval is shown in Table 9. Results show that a high proportion of farmers interrogated (65%) returned back to work in their farms 24 hours (next day) after spraying, 8% reentered in earlier (less than 24 hours) whereas 5% of farmers observed 72 hours.

Table 9. Re-entry interval.

|          | < 24 hours | 24 hours | 48 hours | 72 hours |
|----------|------------|----------|----------|----------|
| n        | n          | n        | n        | n        |
| %        | %          | %        | %        | %        |
| 20       | 8          | 161      | 53       | 12       |
|          | 0%         | 65%      | 22%      | 5%       |

Note: n represents number of farmers.

3.9. Pre-Harvest Interval Observed by Farmers

The Figure 2 presents the pre-harvest period observed by the sample of vegetable farmers.

![Figure 2](image)

Source: Survey, 2016.

A higher proportion of farmers (49.9%) harvested over two weeks after the last pesticide application while more than 11% harvested less than 7 days after the last spray. Results also show that 2.8% did not pay attention on the pre-harvest interval even if they had applied pesticides.
4. DISCUSSION

This study assessed farmers’ knowledge as well as their safety practices while applying pesticides to control pest in vegetable crops in Lubumbashi. Understanding the actual farmers perception, attitudes and their safety practices can help to deploy or to re-enforce the program of awareness to relieve farmers from pesticide hazards [17, 21].

4.1. Farmers’ Perception of Pesticides

Vegetable farmers (97.6%) in Lubumbashi used pesticides, especially insecticides because they helped to control pests and improved vegetable quality. That point of view is consistent with many studies conducted in many countries stating that pesticides boost crop productivity and reduce yield losses [2, 3, 6, 18, 19, 32]. Inspite of the perceived benefits, farmers had also a negative perception of pesticides. A good part among farmers considered respectively the pesticides as a poison (38.7%) and source of diseases for human (36%). That farmers’ concern is likely normal and true because pesticide applicators in many countries reported self-poisoning and discomfort cases (headache, skin itching, fatigue and cancer) after a short or long period of using pesticides [5, 11, 12, 14]. Few farmers mentioned that pesticides destroy also non target insects such as bees. Bommarco, et al. [33] highlighted also the loss of beneficial natural enemies of crops after spraying insecticides.

4.2. Farmers’ Knowledge and Pesticide Handling Practices

Farmers attested that pesticides were more risky and dangerous during spraying. This situation can be explained by the fact that using poor spraying equipment such as buckets and brooms, farmers got contaminated with the pesticides during application [15]. However, many farmers were still ignoring the danger of pesticide while measuring the dose and preparing mixtures Figure 1. Concentrated product is more hazardous but also toxic. The preparation of mixtures is a critical operation for pesticide applicators [7, 19]. This step requires more attention and caution in term of safety (personal protective equipment: gloves are a mandatory). Unfortunately, farmers observed were likely minimizing the hazard at this step and did not take appropriate safety measures. The same situation has been observed in Côte d’Ivoire, Togo and Burkina Faso where Ajayi and Akinnifesi [19]; Kanda, et al. [20]; Son, et al. [34] observed respectively that 53%, 87% and 70% of pesticide applicators did not wear any protective equipment from the preparation of the mixture until the end of the treatments. Using complete personal protective equipment (mask, gloves and protective clothing) is encouraged because it helps farmers reduce the risk of exposure to pesticide more than 800 times [34]. Farmers do not use personal protective equipment (PPE) in countries for different reasons: high cost of protective equipment, poverty, high temperature (make farmers uncomfortable), lack of information on PPE, low perception of the risks [13, 19, 20].

4.3. Attitudes and Hygienic Practices

Farmers demonstrated unsafe and poor hygienic practices after spraying the pesticides. All farmers (100%) did not change the clothes and 88% did not wash their hands and feet, mostly contaminated just after spraying. Hands and feet as well as legs are the most exposed to pesticide deposition from mixing, handling contaminated objects, spraying and walking in treated crops [29, 35, 36]. Poor hygienic practices have been reported also among farmers in Burkina Faso where 43% of farmers did not wash their hands after pesticide application [31]. A study conducted in Iran by Seyyed, et al. [37] indicates that most of the farmers do not follow basic pesticide safety measures because they have the lowest perceived risk and believe that the pesticides are not so much dangerous. After spraying, 12% applicators rinsed the material used in flowing river closer to the farm. The same behavior has been observed among farmers in Côte d’Ivoire where pesticide applicators washed their equipment and took bath in rivers near their fields [19]. That practice can lead to the water contamination and affect aquatic biodiversity. In
Lubumbashi the situation seems likely to be critical since the same rivers and water points help wash harvested vegetables before being taken to the city markets.

### 4.4. Re-Entry Period Observed by Vegetable Farmers

The re-entry interval has been short for a high portion (8%) of farmers regarding to the label instructions of pesticide (diclorvos) that states the re-entry interval (REI) to 1 day. Farmers reentered in their fields earlier to water the crops because the amaranths and cruciferous vegetables grown during the dry season require more water as well as maintenance. However, the REI claimed by farmers was not consistent with our observation. For example, 56% applicators kept working in the treated field. Our findings are also different from those obtained in Ghana where 73.3% of farmers returned to their farm within 48 hours after spraying pesticides [11]. The re-entry interval is not always a safe moment for farm workers. Ngowi, et al. [5]; Aktar, et al. [6]; Toumi, et al. [8] revealed that humans come into contact with pesticides during preparing mixtures, spraying and working in a treated field.

### 4.5. Management of Empty Containers of Pesticides

Observation carried out indicated that over 86% of farmers abandoned the empty containers of pesticides in open field. This practice is not good and has been widely reported in many developing countries Kanda, et al. [20]; Son, et al. [34]; Gouda, et al. [38]. A survey conducted in Togo by Kanda, et al. [20] reported that the ignorance of the danger of empty containers has led farmers to poor disposal and management. We observed also that leaving empty containers is dangerous since those containers are collected by children to set up their games and or collected for other domestic use (Keeping drinks). The current disposing techniques stand for a triple rinsing with water of empty containers to reduce systematically pesticide residues. Empty containers are to return back to the manufacturer or recycling agent [39]. However, the challenge in many developing countries like DR Congo is that farmers obtain pesticides in different ways including informal market, donation or exchange between fellow farmers.

### 5. CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable information on farmers’ knowledge of pesticides and reports poor safety practices while preparing mixtures, spraying and rinsing equipment. Findings show that a good part of vegetable farmers is aware of pesticides hazards and consider them as a poison and source of diseases for human. Most of farmers are still ignoring that the preparation of mixture requires more caution in term of safety because the product handled is still concentrated and toxic. Farmers’ knowledge of personal protective equipment, hygienic practices and weather conditions is still limited and this has led farmers to unsafe practices either during or after pesticide application. The re-entry interval is short compared to that reported in West Africa but the good news is that the pre-harvest interval claimed by a high part of farmers meets the label instructions of two of the main insecticides (Lambda-cyhalothrin and Diclorvos) mostly used in Lubumbashi. Since farmers’ health and the protection of the environment should be an important concern for policymakers, the results from this study can hopefully help to design a suitable program of awareness and information for farmers.

**Funding:** This study was carried out as part of our Master Program in the Integrated Production and Preservation of Natural Resources in Urban and Suburban Environment (ULg-Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech), funded by ARES (Académie de Recherche et d’Enseignement Supérieur) in 2017. **Competing Interests:** The authors declare that they have no competing interests. **Acknowledgement:** All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.
REFERENCES

[1] FAO, Growing the greener cities in Democratic republic of Congo, program for urban and periurban horticulture. Rome. Retrieved: http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1901e/i1901e00.pdf, 2010.

[2] I. G. Eleftherohorinos and C. A. Damalas, "Pesticide exposure, safety issues, and risk assessment indicators," International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, vol. 8, pp. 1402-1419, 2011. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph8051402.

[3] M. M. Mattah, P. A. Mattah, and G. Futagbi, "Pesticide application among farmers in the catchment of Ashaiman irrigation scheme of Ghana: Health implications," Journal of Environmental and Public Health, p. 1 to 7, 2015. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1155/2015/547272.

[4] A. M. Balasha, "Drivers of adoption of integrated pest management among small-scale vegetable farmers in Lubumbashi, DR Congo," American Journal of Rural Development, vol. 7, pp. 53-59, 2019.

[5] A. Ngowi, T. Mbise, A. Ijani, L. London, and O. Ajayi, "Smallholder vegetable farmers in Northern Tanzania: Pesticides use practices, perceptions, cost and health effects," Crop Protection, vol. 26, pp. 1617-1624, 2007. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cropro.2007.01.008.

[6] W. Akhtar, D. Sengupta, and A. Chowdhury, "Impact of pesticides use in agriculture: Their benefits and hazards," Interdisciplinary Toxicology, vol. 2, pp. 1-12, 2009. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/10807039.2018.1485092.

[7] W. Katinka and R. Sririvasan, "Farmers' management of cabbage and cauliflower pests in India and their approaches to crop protection," Journal of Asia-Pacific Entomology, vol. 12, pp. 253-259, 2009. Available at: https://doi.org/10.17221/69/2017-ppps.

[8] B. Schiffers, "Operator safety and good phytosanitary practices, PIP / COLEACP Program, p. 246. Retrieved: https://training.coleacp.org › mod_data › content › coleacp-manuel-4-fr-0," 2011.

[9] B. Mushagalusa and N. Kesonga, "Pesticide use practices by Chinese cabbage growers in suburban environment of Lubumbashi (DR Congo): Main pests, costs and risks," Journal of Applied Economics and Policy Analysis, vol. 2, pp. 56-64, 2019.

[10] E. Lekei, A. Ngowi, and L. Leslie, "Pesticide retailers' knowledge and handling practices in selected towns of Tanzania," Environmental Health, vol. 13, pp. 2-9, 2014. Available at: 10.1186/s12940-016-0203-3.
Y. G. Maria, C. A. Van Gestel, N. M. Van Straalen, B. Widianto, H. R. Sunoko, and M. N. Shohib, "Knowledge, attitude, and practice of Indonesian farmers regarding the use of personal protective equipment against pesticide exposure," *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment*, vol. 187, pp. 1-7, 2015. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10661-015-4871-3.

R. P. Jhalendra, R. Regmi, R. Ghimire, K. D. Puri, S. Gyawaly, and S. Poudel, "Farmers' knowledge on pesticide safety and pest management practices: A case study of vegetable growers in Chitwan, Nepal," *Agriculture*, vol. 8, pp. 1-11, 2018. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/agriculture8010016.

O. C. Ajayi and F. K. Akinnifesi, "Farmers understanding of pesticide safety labels and field spraying practices: A case study of cotton farmers in northern Côte d'Ivoire," *Scientific Research and Essays*, vol. 2, pp. 204-210, 2007.

M. Kanda, G. Djanyeye-Boundjou, K. Wala, K. Gnandi, K. Batawila, A. Sanni, and K. Akpagana, "Application des pesticides en agriculture maraîchère au Togo," *Vertigo-the Electronic Journal in Environmental Sciences*, vol. 13, p. 21, 2013.

A. Vaidya, D. Gwynwali, S. Tiwari, B. R. Pande, and E. Jørs, "Changes in perceptions and practices of farmers and pesticide retailers on safer pesticide use and alternatives: Impacts of a community intervention in Chitwan, Nepal," *Environmental Health Insights*, vol. 11, pp. 1-12, 2017. Available at: 10.1177/117863021771927.

S. Y. Useni, K. R. Sambiéni, J. Maréchal, W. I. E. Ilunga, F. Malaisse, J. Bogaert, and K. F. Munyemba, "Changes in the spatial pattern and ecological functionalities of green spaces in Lubumbashi (the Democratic Republic of Congo) in relation with the degree of urbanization," *Tropical Conservation Science*, vol. 11, pp. 1-17, 2018. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1940082917717125.

S. Useni, A. Marie, G. Mahy, K. Cabala, F. Malaisse, F. Munyemba, and J. Bogaert, *Landscape interpretation of the urbanization process in Lubumbashi: Dynamics of the spatial structure and monitoring of indicators ecological between 2002 and 2008. In Bogaert J., Colinet G., Mahy G., 2018. Anthropization of landscapes Katanges. Gembloux, Belgium: Presses University of Liège - Agronomie-Gembloux*, 2018.

United Nations, "Department of economic and social affairs, population division, The world's cities in 2016-data booklet (ST/ESA/ SER.A/392)." Retrieved: https://www.un.org › publications › pdf › urbanization, 2016.

A. Nyumbaiza, *Urban agriculture, land and sustainability. The case of Lubumbashi in: Bogaert J. and Halleux (Eds). Peri-urban territories: Development, challenges and prospects in the countries of the South* Gembloux Agronomic Presses, 2015.

N. Tambwe, M. Rudolph, and R. Greenstein, "Instead of begging, I farm to feed my children: Urban agriculture—an alternative to copper and cobalt in Lubumbashi," *Africa*, vol. 81, pp. 391-412, 2011. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/s000197201100043x.

B. Mushagalusa and N. Kesonga, "Evaluation of the economic performance of Chinese cabbage (Brassica chinensis L.) farms in market gardening in Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *African Journal of Environment and Agriculture*, vol. 2, pp. 11-19, 2019.

H. Erens, M. Boudin, F. Mees, B. B. Mujinya, G. Baert, M. Van Strydonck, P. Boeckx, and E. Van Ranst, "The age of large termite mounds—radiocarbon dating of Macrotermes falciger mounds of the Miombo woodland of Katanga, DR Congo," *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology*, vol. 455, pp. 265-271, 2015. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.palaeo.2015.06.017.

A. J. Lawson, H. Akohou, S. Lorge, and B. Schifers, "Three methods to assess levels of farmers’ exposure to pesticides in the urban and peri-urban areas of Northern Benin," *Tunisian Journal of Plant Protection*, vol. 12, pp. 91-108, 2017.

T. Munyuli, K. Chihere, D. Rubabura, K. Mitima, Y. Kalimba, N. Tchombe, E. K. Mulangane, O. Birhashwira, M. Umoja, and E. Cinyabuguma, "Farmers’ perceptions, believes, knowledge and management practices of potato pests in South-Kivu Province, Eastern of Democratic Republic of Congo," *Open Agriculture*, vol. 2, pp. 362-385, 2017. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1515/opag-2017-0040.

S. Diakalia, F. K. Zerbo, S. Bonzi, A. Legrève, I. Somda, and B. Schifers, "Assessment of tomato (Solanum lycopersicum L.) producers' exposure level to pesticides, in Kouka and Toussiana (Burkina Faso)," *International Journal..."
of Environmental Research and Public Health, vol. 15, pp. 1-17, 2018. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph1502004.

G. Abdollahzadeh, M. S. Sharifzadeh, and C. A. Damalas, "Perceptions of the beneficial and harmful effects of pesticides among Iranian rice farmers influence the adoption of biological control," Crop Protection, vol. 75, pp. 124-131, 2015. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cropro.2015.05.018.

R. Bommarco, F. Miranda, H. Bylund, and C. Björkman, "Insecticides suppress natural enemies and increase pest damage in cabbage," Journal of Economic Entomology, vol. 104, pp. 782-791, 2011. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1603/ec10444.

D. Son, I. Somda, A. Legreve, and B. Schiffers, "Phytosanitary practices of tomato producers in Burkina Faso and risks to health and the environment," Cahiers Agricultures, vol. 26, pp. 1-6, 2017. Available at: 10.1051/cagri/2017010.

D. Snelder, M. Masipiqueña, and G. De Snoo, "Risk assessment of pesticide usage by smallholder farmers in the Cagayan Valley (Philippines)," Crop Protection, vol. 27, pp. 747-762, 2008. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cropro.2007.10.011.

K. Toumi, L. Joly, C. Vleminckx, and B. Schiffers, "Potential demal exposure of florists to fungicide residues on flowers and risk assessment," Communications in Agricultural and Applied Biological Sciences, vol. 82, p. 11, 2017.

M. Seyyed, R. Reza, K. Mohammad, and C. Damalas, "Pesticide use and risk perceptions among farmers in Southwest Iran," Human and Ecological Risk Assessment: An International Journal, vol. 18, pp. 456-470, 2012.

A. I. Gouda, I. I. Toko, S. D. Salami, M. Richert, M. L. Scippo, P. Kestemont, and B. Schiffers, "Phytosanitary practices and level of pesticide exposure of cotton producers in the North of Benin," Cahiers Agricultures, vol. 27, p. 65002, 2018.

B. Huyghebaert, O. Mostade, and J. Sawa, "Management of empty pesticide containers," Teka Commission for Motorization and Power Industry in Agriculture, vol. 3, pp. 117-126, 2004.