

## Chemical pesticides use widespread

*By: The Phnom Penh Post*

***New research points to prevalent use of imported chemical pesticides by farmers in six provinces, a practice seen by officials as dangerous for farmers, consumers and farmland.***

**NEW** research from the Cambodian Centre for the Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC) suggests that the use of chemical pesticides is widespread and that just 5 percent of farmers who routinely use pesticides on their crops would be willing to switch from chemical pesticide to natural pesticides, a CEDAC official told the Post Thursday. Mr. Keam Makarady, director of CEDAC's Environment and Health Program, said the research draws on interviews conducted in April and May with 300 farming families in six provinces, all of whom said they used chemicals on their crops. He said the research underscored the need for the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to closely regulate the import of agricultural materials.

CEDAC research indicates that in 2008, some 147 types of chemical pesticides were available at markets in Cambodia, between 40 and 50 of which were considered harmful to farmers and consumers of the crops. "At present, at least 30 companies are importing pesticides into Cambodia, but we do not know how many of them are illegal," Keam Makarady said.

### **Chemical complications**

Mr. Keam Makarady said 51 percent of imported chemical pesticides come from Vietnam, 37 percent from Thailand, 4 percent from India and 1 percent from China.

Ministry of Agriculture guidelines stipulate that all chemical importers must translate instruction labels into Khmer to prevent misuse, but CEDAC estimates that as many as 90 percent of Cambodian farmers who use the pesticides may nonetheless have inadvertently poisoned themselves. "The Ministry of Agriculture is concerned about the increasing use of chemical poisons among farmers in Cambodia," said a ministry official who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press. The official said the ministry had

been trying to promote natural fertilizers through a combination of "model farm" projects and an educational campaign involving public forums and television and radio spots. "We are trying to encourage farmers to use traditional pesticides to get rid of insects," the official said.

Phin Rady, chief of water and soil quality management in the Environment Ministry's Department of Pollution Control, said he believes "the use of poisons on paddy fields badly affects the environment" as well as the health of farmers. "When it rains, the poisons will flow with the rain into irrigation systems and then into the rivers," he said. "Consequently, aquatic creatures and people who drink water from the rivers will get poisoned. "He added: "Moreover, too much use of poison may soon make the land become less and less fertile."