

**Sri. Rajesh Verma,**  
**Additional Secretary (PP),**  
**Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare**  
Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi  
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**22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2019**

Sub: Drones in pesticide spraying – representation regarding

Dear Sir,

**Presently, I wish to bring to your notice the increased usage of drones for agro-chemical spraying, especially highly hazardous pesticides.** As you are aware aerial spraying impacts a larger area, while decreasing the efficacy on the target pests. We have seen Kasaragode in Kerala reeling under such impacts due to aerial spraying of endosulfan for the past more than 25 years. We are also aware that farmers, and sprayers, ignore and/or cannot follow safety precautions under adverse weather and wind conditions. Drift of spraying can take the fine hazardous chemical beyond the range of application.

You are aware that Insecticide Act does not allow aerial spraying, in general. It was done long before drones have been conceived as an idea and technology. Presently, we need to expand the specific clause that restricts aerial spraying to include drones and unmanned machines. Drones and unmanned machines can be hazardous tools for spraying hazardous chemicals, in many ways. To cite, there are number of incidents where village rivalry led to misuse of hazardous agrochemical to settle scores or wreak vengeance. Earlier it was mixing in food and water. But with drones the potential to contaminate air and other sources of daily life without any one being aware of the source has increased. Allowing aerial spraying, using drones and unmanned, remote controlled vehicles can be catastrophic.

In these circumstances, we are reading news with alarm that drones may be allowed for spraying hazardous agrochemicals. These hazardous agrochemicals pose danger to people, environment and ecology in various pathways. Occupational hazard is one among them. Drones will not prevent ecological damage. Persons involved in preparing sprays, mixing chemicals, washing equipment, are affected, with or without drones. It at best avoids body contamination of the sprayer, while spraying. But will affect all persons who walk and work in the fields, sprayed by chemicals.

Additionally without any trials, with approved scientific methods, drones are being used. There is no scientific validity that drones help in precision spraying.

**In summary, I request you desist from approving drones for spraying.** In fact, active efforts have to be undertaken to dissuade farmers, who are already using them. Drone manufacturers, suppliers and the entire network have to be cautioned against using drone for aerial spraying of agro-chemicals. Strict monitoring has to be enabled through State Agricultural Departments. Pending the amendment to the Insecticide Act to include drones in the specific clause that prohibits aerial spraying, **we request you to issue advisory to all concerned regulatory authorities against allowing drone usage for agrochemical spraying.**

**I request you to take immediate action in this regard.**

With best regards.



**Dr. Narasimha Reddy Donthi**

Copy to:

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2. Dr. J. P. Singh, Secretary (CIBRC), Central Insecticides Board & Registration Committee, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, NH4, CGO Complex, Faridabad 121 001, cibsecy@nic.in