

Laboratory alternatives for small countries – two examples of outsourcing pesticide surveys

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Abstract:

Over the past 30 years we had been requested many times to support the establishment of analytical laboratories in developing countries dealing for instance with pesticide quality control, residue monitoring, or other food safety related issues. Having encountered numerous challenges in establishing such laboratories in developing countries and having experienced numerous difficulties with their sustainability, we would like to present some alternatives to the establishment of own laboratories.

This will of course not apply to all situations or all countries but it may offer acceptable solutions to defined problems for some countries.

Why should we have alternatives?

- Establishing laboratories is a long term effort
- Needs specialized design and construction expertise
- Expensive to build, run and maintain (budget usually not sufficient)
- Requires highly qualified and motivated staff (not readily available)

Unfortunately, our experience over the past decades has shown that the sustainability of public laboratories in some developing countries has been extremely difficult. Furthermore, it is obvious that apart from of the technical difficulties, such high investments need some return to be economic – something that is a burden for small countries ... not only for developing countries but also for small industrialized countries.

We like to present two examples of outsourcing analytical work as alternatives to maintaining own analytical laboratories – two examples that have been successfully implemented recently and which would also fit into new strategies supported by FAO:

(1) a survey on land contamination by obsolete pesticides

(2) a pesticide residue survey on a group of islands

Advantages and disadvantages are discussed.