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### Reducing agricultural pesticide poisoning in sub-Saharan Africa: Beyond zero-risk

The high population growth rate (three percent) for Sub-Saharan Africa is particularly ominous regarding food needs if the rapid rate of movement of people from rural areas, the site of food production, to urban areas is considered. In view of the need for self-sufficiency in food production, and the expansion of export agriculture, several countries in sub-Saharan Africa have been aggressively promoting the use of agricultural inputs such as pesticides. Agricultural pesticides are, however poisons by design as these chemicals are intended for use in destroying any pest that may interfere with the production or the processing of agricultural products. The capacity of pesticides to destroy is however not limited to pests but may result in serious risks to human health and to the environment. The incidence of occupational agricultural pesticide poisoning or contamination is particularly high in developing countries. In contrast to the zero-risk approach this paper suggests a mix of options for reducing agricultural pesticide poisoning in sub-Saharan Africa; pesticide risk communication and education programs, providing government subsidy for the purchase of less toxic but usually more expensive pesticides; discontinuing calendar-based pesticide application; limiting the importation of highly toxic agricultural pesticides; and encouraging the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies.

### Biography

Olurominiyi Ibitayo is a Professor in the School of Public Affairs at Texas Southern University, Houston, Texas. He received his PhD in Public Administration from Arizona State University in 1994. His research interests and publications include environmental and occupational risk assessment, use and misuse of agricultural pesticides, neighborhood-level research, and emergency management. His publications have appeared in a diverse set of reputable journals including *Risk Analysis*, *Journal of Hazardous Materials*, *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, and *Hort Science* among others.

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