

Experts task NAFDAC on substandard pesticides

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Crop protection experts Monday urged the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) to extend its enforcement to include checking the influx of substandard pesticides.

The experts told newsmen in Abuja that NAFDAC's failure to check the influx of substandard pesticides had led to crop failure and revenue losses.

According to them, the development has also jeopardised the crop protection industry and deprived farmers of their livelihood.

They said that NAFDAC focused more on, monitoring and regulating the pharmaceutical industry to the detriment of the agriculture sector.

Mr Mohammed Murtala, who works for an agro-chemicals manufacturing company said that NAFDAC's personnel were mainly pharmacists and chemists.

He said that lots of crop protection products without NAFDAC registration number were on sale in the markets across the country.

"These products still flood the Nigerian market unabated there has been no record of seizure of such products," he said.

Murtala put the revenue loss to the government through smuggling of these products to about two billion naira annually.

The agronomist suggested that a crop protection and monitoring agency should be set up under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources.

This measure, if implemented, would ensure proper enforcement of regulations, he said.

Also commenting, Mr Goodluck Ogu, an official of a crop protection company, corroborated Murtala's views.

Ogu said: "Substandard products rob farmers of investment, pose health hazard to consumers and make Nigerian products uncompetitive at the international market."

He listed the health hazards to include skin and lung cancer, among other diseases.

The experts observed that compounds like "Monocrotophos" and "Diazon", examples of Class 'A' toxic chemicals banned by the European Union, were still active ingredients in crop protection products sold in the Nigeria market.

These experts were among the facilitators at a two-day workshop on the "Responsible Use of Pesticides in Crop Protection" organised for farmers, agricultural input dealers and journalists.

The workshop was organised by the International Centre for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development (IFDC) and Croplife Africa/Middle East, an international agricultural agency.

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