

# Knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) among agricultural extension workers concerning the reduction of the adverse impact of pesticides in agricultural areas in Tanzania

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## KEY WORDS

Pesticides; Tanzania; agricultural extension; KAP; exposure; hazard

## SUMMARY

**Background:** *Extension workers are educated locally to enable them to train farmers in using improved local farming methods and imported technology, such as pesticides, to increase crop production. However, the extension workers are not adequately trained in health aspects of pesticides and hence are unable to provide adequate services to farmers with regard to safe use of pesticides.* **Objective:** *The present study assessed the knowledge, attitudes and practices of agricultural extension workers with respect to health effects of pesticides in order to develop strategies for the control of pesticide exposure and prevention of pesticide poisoning in Tanzania.* **Methods:** *A survey of Tanzanian agricultural extensionists was undertaken in 1991-1994 using a standardized questionnaire in face-to-face interviews. Extensionists who were district agricultural officers, assistant agricultural officers, agricultural assistants, and field assistants, working in the coffee and cotton growing areas (N=61) within a radius of 15 km of farm, estate or village under farm worker study (reported elsewhere) were included in the survey.* **Results:** *The majority of extensionists knew that pesticides could enter the human body but only a quarter perceived pesticides as a major problem in the community they served. The majority showed awareness of potential health hazards of the different pesticides used in their service areas, but they did not recognize what pesticides were responsible for poisoning. A high proportion was familiar with first aid procedures in case of pesticide poisoning; however, many procedures described were not appropriate for pesticide poisoning.* **Conclusions:** *The survey indicated that training of agricultural workers in health aspects of pesticide exposure is an important task for adequate provision of service to farmers with regard to safe use of pesticides in Tanzania. Nevertheless, the appropriate role of extensionists in reducing the health impact of pesticides would be to advocate pesticides of low toxicity or non-chemical pest control.*

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