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"Development on the margin"

Adverse Effects of Agrochemicals on Migratory Waterbirds in Africa

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to gather proof that the application of agrochemicals, amongst other factors, has an impact on migratory waterbirds. As empirical data is missing, this thesis has to rely entirely on literature. Numbers of migratory birds are declining, and so far exact reasons are unknown. Agrochemicals have adverse impacts on migratory waterbirds. Fertiliser pollution can cause the destruction of habitats and pesticide pollution can deprive birds from their food or intoxicate them, consequently leading to metabolic disturbances, breeding failures or instant death.

Data about the application of pesticides in Africa is scarce or if available old or inconsistent. African agriculture is diverse, comprising diverse systems. Pesticide legislation, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, is weak. Prices of pesticides have increased since the implementation of structural adjustment programmes. African farmers rely on pesticides and the majority of poor farmers acquire pesticides of doubtful quality from illicit sources. Many farmers lack knowledge about the correct handling of pesticides.

Environmental destruction and pesticide pollution have occurred in the past and are still occurring today on an increasing scale. Against this background it is most likely that pesticide application mostly overdosed is contributing to the declining numbers of migratory waterbirds.

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