16 - Cross-contamination of oilseeds by insecticide residues during storage

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Abstract

Pesticide residues are found in oilseeds (rapeseed and sunflower) and crude oils: they are mainly organophosphate insecticides (pirimiphos-methyl, malathion) used in empty storage facilities and for application to stored cereal grains. Even if pests are found in stored oilseeds, French regulation does not allow use of these insecticides on stored oilseeds. These residues arise from cross-contamination from storage bins and facilities, and not from illegal use. This uptake of insecticide residues from their storage environment by oilseeds can lead to levels that exceed regulatory limits. A two-year investigation in grain storage companies allowed us to follow the course of 27 sunflower batches (storage season 2006-2007) and 21 rapeseed batches (storage season 2007-2008), from reception at the storage facilities to outloading. Samples from each of these batches, made at outloading, were analysed by ITERG, looking for insecticide residues. Traceability of oilseeds established by storers allowed us to identify cross-contamination sources. Substances discovered were mostly pirimiphos-methyl, and malathion, dihlorovos (in sunflower), plus chlorpyriphos-methyl and deltaméthrine (one case). Pirimiphos-methyl was most commonly detected, and caused most cases of non-accordance with regulatory levels in rapeseed. Main cross-contamination hazard resulted from treatment of cereals at their receipt during the same period of rapeseed receipt, especially when these cereals treatments were frequent on that elevator. For sunflower, main cross-contamination hazard resulted from treatment of cereals at outloading, just before sunflower seeds were outloaded, especially when these cereals treatments were frequent on that elevator. Other situations led to cross-contaminations, but generally of lower levels: oilseeds stored in bin that contained previously treated cereals, empty bins and handling equipment treated before receipt of oilseeds.

Introduction

Post-harvest insecticide residues can be sometimes found on oilseeds, at low levels. But, no insecticide is allowed to be applied directly on oilseeds during storage. Consequently, maximum residue levels (MRLs) allowed by European regulation are very low (mostly at the lower limit of analytical determination): 0,05 mg/kg for pirimiphos-methyl, 0,05 mg/kg for chlorpyriphos-methyl and 0,1 mg/kg for deltamethrin on rapeseed. No MRL existed for malathion during this study, so it shouldn't be found beyond the analytical limit of quantification (10 µg/kg); but since September 2008 the MRL for malathion in oilseeds is 0,02 mg/kg (Commission regulation n°839/2008 of 31 July 2008).

These insecticide treatments are authorised on stored cereals and corn as grain protectants, and on empty storage and handling equipment as control agents for residual insect populations in empty granaries. Pirimiphos-methyl and still malathion were the substances most employed during this study (storage season 2007-2008). Dichlorvos and malathion were forbidden and could be used only until 1st December 2008. As MRL for dichlorvos has lowered to 0,01 mg/kg in cereals in November 2006, this substance, which was largely used until the previous storage season 2006-2007, could not be used by storage companies anymore. MRL of malathion hadn't been lowered in cereals, so it could be still be used.

We can hypothesise that cross-contamination phenomena can exist, between these various kinds of seeds, cereals and oilseeds, sharing the same grain handling and storage system. This phenomena has already been demonstrated in Canada on rapeseed (Watter and Nowicki 1982 ; White 1983 ; White and Nowicki 1985), when empty bins are treated with organophosphorous insecticides (bromophos, malathion, fenitrothion). Canadian storers were warned that treating before storing rapeseed could lead to residues above the maximum allowable limits.

Uptake of pirimiphos-methyl by a single-layer of rapeseed or wheat on galvanized-steel surfaces was demonstrated in a laboratory study (Dauguet and al 2007). It was shown that, for small bins (less than 50 tons), it could lead to residues quantities above regulatory limits.

In order to improve our knowledge about this post-harvest insecticide cross-contamination, especially in big elevators, an investigation was carried out with the collaboration of several French grain storage companies on sunflower seeds during the storage season 2006-2007 (Dauguet OCL 2007). An investigation, similar to the previous one on sunflower seeds, concerns rapeseed harvested in 2007. Dichlorvos was not used anymore during the storage season 2007-2008, so grain protection strategies changed. Rapeseed is harvested in june-july, like cereals (wheat and barley).

Materials and methods

The process adopted for these surveys on oilseeds was:

- Identifying, with storage operators, oilseed lots that could be "traced" (recording of each step from receipt to outloading).
- Making a mean sample from each batch representative of oilseed arriving at the storage facilities ("first sample") and preserving it. These samples are preserved if we suspect that contamination occurred before receipt by the grain company.
- Making a mean sample representative of outloaded oilseed, "final sample", when the traced lot is commercialized (from one to eight months after harvesting). All these "final samples" were analysed. The sampling method used was based on a standard method (moving seeds, for contaminant with heterogeneous distribution determination, PR EN ISO 24333:2006): 25 elementary samples for 500 tons evenly distributed during the outloading (one elementary sample each 20 tons).
- Filling a questionnaire called "traceability" which recorded each step from receipt to outloading.

Determination of insecticide residues in all "final samples": the analytical laboratory ITERG (Pessac, 33, France) conducted these determinations : Soxhlet extraction of oil with hexane (NF EN ISO 659), pre-purification with acetonitril and freezing, purification with solid phase extraction C18 and Florisil cartridges, analysis by gaseous chromatography with NPD detection (organophosphorous) and ECD (pyrethrinoid).

Results

Twenty-eight samples of sunflower seeds and twenty-two samples of rapeseed were analyzed. (Table 1, Table 2).

The insecticides used on cereals and for storage facilities treatment were detected on rapeseed : pirimiphos-methyl, malathion, chlorpyriphos-methyl and deltamethrin (only 1 case). The most commonly detected substance was pirimiphos-methyl, quantified in 55% of samples. This substance also caused most cases of non-accordance with MRL, in 32 % of the samples.

On the whole, final samples were quite contaminated as half of them contained more than 34 µg/kg of insecticide residues (sum of residues median), and 10% of them contained more than 581 µg/kg (sum of residues 9th decile).

Compared with the results obtained in the previous investigation on sunflower harvested in 2006 (Table 1), pirimiphos-methyl is much more often found in rapeseed, especially above MRL, and with higher levels (mean for rapeseed 130 µg/kg, mean for sunflower seeds 19 µg/kg). Dichlorvos is not found anymore in rapeseed because of the new regulation.

Tab. 1 analytical results (expressed in µg/kg) on the 28 final samples of sunflower seeds (storage campaign 2006-2007)

	LQ	MRL	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	9th decile	Maxi	% samples ≥ LD	% samples ≥ LQ	% samples MRL
Dichlorvos	10	10	21	0	79	27	422	32%	29%	21%
Pirimiphos-methyl	10	50	19	5	55	29	295	61%	39%	4%
Chlorpyriphos-methyl	10	50	0	0			10	4%	4%	0%
Malathion	10	-	8	0	25	17	125	18%	18%	18%
Sum of residues			48	12	102	120	427			

LQ: limit of quantification, LD: limit of detection, MRL: maximum residues limits in sunflower seeds. Sum of residues: a value of 5 µg/kg is given when a substance is detected but below the limit of quantification, and zero value if under the limit of detection.

<u>Traceability analysis</u>

Four cases leading to cross-contamination were identified:

- K1: treatment of cereals at outloading, just before outloading of oilseeds
- K2: outloading of cereals, treated at their receipt, just before outloading of oilseeds
- K3: storage of treated cereals in the same bin just before storage of oilseeds
- K4: treatment of empty bin and of handling equipment before receiving oilseeds
- K5: receipt of oilseeds at the same time that cereals treated at receipt (concerns only rapeseed)

Tab. 2 analytical results (expressed in µg/kg) on the 22 final samples of rapeseed (storage campaign 2007-2008)

	LQ	MRL	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	9th decile	Maxi	% samples ≥ LQ	% samples > MRL
Pirimiphos-methyl	10	50	130	22	266	335	1117	55%	32%
Malathion	10	-	19	0	69	16	322	18%	18%
Chlorpyriphos-methyl	10	50	3	0	9	0	31	9%	0%
Deltamethrin	10	100	1	0	3	0	13	5%	0%
Sum of residues			152	34	290	581	1161		

LQ: limit of quantification ; MRL: maximum residues limits in rapeseed. Sum of residues: 0 µg/kg if under the limit of quantification.

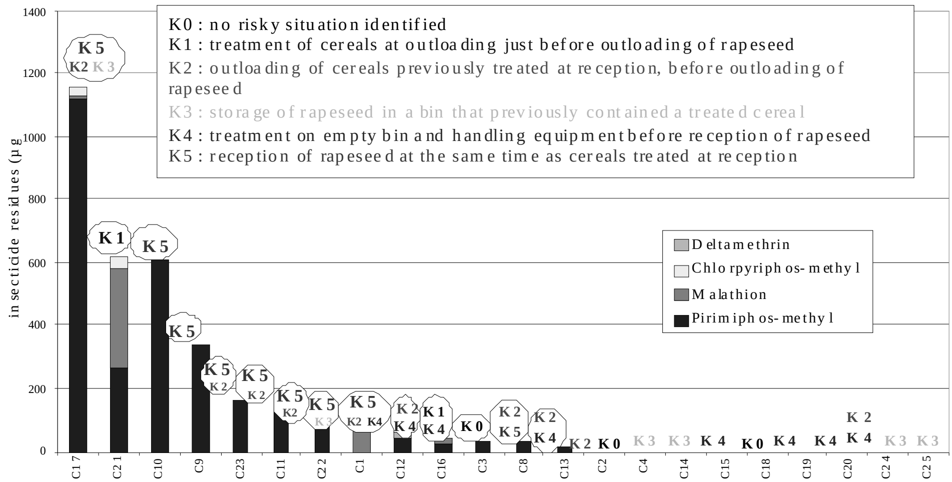

Fig. 1 Distribution of the five cases for each rapeseed lot

It appears that the biggest cross-contamination on rapeseed occurred with the situation K5. This one is characteristic of rapeseed, which is harvested during the same period than cereals (wheat, barley) in june-july. Most samples with pirimiphos-methyl above MRL are in the situation K5. Looking at each sample, we can observe that highest contaminations occur when treatments on cereals at receipt are systematic. Treatments of cereals at receipt increased during this campaign because dichlorvos was banned. Indeed dichlorvos could be used when there was pest infestation just before commercialization. Now storage operators seem to prefer strategy of security against pest, with preventive treatments: in this investigation 29% treat cereals at receipt systematically, 52% treat occasionally, and 19% never treat at receipt. There is only one case with deltamethrin residues (13 µg/kg), in one silo where cereals are systematically treated with this substance at their receipt. In the other silos, deltamethrin is used occasionally. It seems that contaminations with deltamethrin are slight for the time being, either because it is used since a few time, either because quantities applied are low.

K5 can also be linked to problem on insecticide application equipment: weak escape in the treatment system, treatment not stopped after cereals going on treating the empty circuit (accumulation of substance), mistake possible with treatment directly on rapeseed received just after cereals. These problems could not be checked in our investigation.

The situation K1 is less frequent than the situation K5, but can also lead to cross-contaminations (C21, C3). It was this situation, in the previous investigation on sunflower, that led to the highest contaminations when treatment of cereals was systematic at outloading. It can also occur on rapeseed. In the case C21, malathion and chlorpyriphos-methyl were not used during the storage campaign 2007-2008, but during previous campaigns. This silo is made of concrete; so we can guess that this material can keep residues more than a year.

The case K2 can also lead to slighter cross-contaminations. The cases K3 and K4 do cause problems, except if there are associated to other risky situations.

Conclusion

Our study in real situations showed that cross-contaminations of oilseeds by post-harvest insecticide residues exist, and can sometimes lead to residues above the regulatory limits.

The highest risk of contamination for rapeseed appears when cereals are systematically treated at receipt, at the same time than rapeseed receipt, using the same conveyer circuits. The other identified cases can also lead to slighter contamination. But, silo operators have to concentrate on accumulation of several risky cases, which can worsen the contamination.

Other sources of insecticide residues can occur in storage facilities, but we couldn’t check them in this investigation. This include leak of insecticide by the application equipment.

We noticed differences in cross-contaminations between sunflower and rapeseed, especially because of the harvest period. But also this new investigation was carried out in the new regulatory context in which dichlorvos and malathion are forbidden for cereal treatment. Thus storage operators have new grain protection strategies, with more preventive strategies to protect cereals against pests.

So in order to reduce these cross-contaminations, we can advise to avoid sharing same receipt circuits when cereals are systematically treated, and to avoid accumulation of risky situations. It is also very important to verify the insecticide treatment equipment. This investigation allowed us to make the storage companies aware of this issue, and to help them to understand how cross-contaminations can occur in their silos and how to avoid them, knowing that each silo is different of the others.

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