

# Introduction

## 1.1 How do I decide if it is necessary to use a pesticide?

Using pesticides incorrectly can put people and the environment at risk. If you use a pesticide when you don't need to, you will be wasting money and increasing the possibility of pests becoming resistant. In some cases you might also damage the treated area. A pest, weed or disease being present does not justify taking action against it.

For these reasons, you should take care when deciding whether or not to use a pesticide.

- Identify the specific weed, disease or pest affecting the area you are concerned about.
- Ask yourself whether you need to use a pesticide or whether there is another method of control or combination of methods you could use.
- Consider the financial loss, damage or visual effect caused by the pest, weed or disease and whether this outweighs the cost of using the pesticide.
- Consider whether the doses or concentrations of pesticides being used might damage the area being treated or the next crop planted there.
- Ask yourself whether you can make these decisions yourself or whether you need someone to help.
- If you decide to use a pesticide, plan how to use it properly. Is it possible to reduce the amount you use or the area you apply it to?



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## 1.2 What advice is given in this code?

This code of practice explains how you can use pesticides and plant protection products safely and so meet the legal conditions which cover their use.

The term 'plant protection products' is defined in the Plant Protection Products Regulations 2005, regulation 2. It means a substance or preparation that contains one or more 'active' ingredients (in the form in which it is supplied to the user) which are intended to:

- protect plants or plant products against all harmful organisms or prevent the action of those organisms;
- influence the processes of plants, other than as a nutrient (for example, to regulate growth);
- preserve plant products (except for substances or products which are controlled under European Union law on preservatives);

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- destroy unwanted plants; or
- destroy parts of plants or control or prevent the undesired growth of plants.

The term 'pesticides' is defined in the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 (as amended by the Control of Pesticide (Amendment) Regulations 1997), regulation 3. Briefly, it means any substance, preparation or organism that is prepared for or used to control any pest. A pest is any unwanted plant, harmful creature, or organism that is harmful to plants, wood or other plant products.

Throughout this code we use the term 'pesticide' to cover pesticides and plant protection products. 'Pesticides' and 'plant protection products' are herbicides (products to kill weeds and other unwanted plants), insecticides (products to kill bugs), molluscicides (products to kill slugs and snails), vertebrate control agents (products that control small animals and birds, such as rodenticides, which kill rats and mice) and so on. Table 1 below lists everything covered by this code.

### 1.3 What does this code cover?

**Table 1:** This code covers everything listed below

#### **Edible crops (including treating the seed, the growing crop and the harvested crop)**

- **All edible agricultural and horticultural crops** (outdoor and protected crops including cereals, oilseeds, vegetable brassicas, top fruit, legumes, soft fruit, leafy vegetables, stem vegetables, bulb vegetables, fruiting vegetables and root and tuber crops), including those grown for forage or fodder (grazing or animal feed)
- **Herbs**
- **Agricultural herbage** (any type of crop grown to feed livestock)
- **Edible fungi**
- **Apiculture** (empty honeycombs and beehives)
- **Other edible crops** (for example hops, figs, quinoa)

#### **Non-edible crops**

- **Green cover** (grass or plants on land that is temporarily not being used to produce edible crops)
- **Forestry**
  - Forest nurseries
  - Forests or woodland for producing timber for sale, coppicing (broad-leaved trees like hazel or willow that can be cut down to the stump and regrow with lots of stems, called poles, which can be harvested and used in a wide range of products)
  - Forests or woodland for amenity, recreation, conservation and landscaping
  - Farm forestry on arable land or improved grassland
  - Cut logs and felled timber waiting to go to the saw mill
- **Ornamental plants**
- **Industrial crops** (for example, *Miscanthus* spp grown for any industrial use)

**Table 1:** This code covers everything listed below (*continued*)

<p><b>Non-crop uses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Structural treatments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Crop storage areas and equipment for handling crops</li> <li>– Protected cropping structures</li> <li>– Interior landscapes</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Use in or near water</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Land immediately next to water</b></li> <li>• <b>Areas of an estuary between the low- and high-tide marks</b></li> <li>• <b>Open or enclosed water</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Industrial and amenity areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Amenity grassland</b> (areas of semi-natural or planted grassland that need little management, such as golf fairways, road verges and parkland)</li> <li>• <b>Amenity vegetation</b> (areas of semi-natural or ornamental plants, including trees and bare soil around ornamental plants)</li> <li>• <b>Managed turf</b> (areas of frequently mown, intensively-managed turf such as sports pitches, golf and bowling greens and tennis courts)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Plant-free areas (herbicides only)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Natural surfaces that plants are not supposed to grow on</b> (areas of soil or natural rock such as strips around fields, fence lines and barriers, but not including land between rows of crops)</li> <li>• <b>Permeable surfaces (that is, surfaces that liquids can pass through) on top of soil</b> (any man-made permeable surface, such as gravel, that lies over the soil and that plants are not supposed to grow on. This includes permeable sports surfaces but not railway ballast – stones forming the bed of a railway track)</li> <li>• <b>Hard surfaces</b> (any man-made impermeable surface – that is, a surface that liquid cannot pass through – such as concrete or tarmac that plants should not grow on, including railway ballast)</li> <li>• <b>Wooden surfaces</b> (such as decking)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Vertebrate control in plant protection situations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Products</b> for use in the situations described above (such as agricultural fields, glasshouses, forestry and amenity areas) to protect plants or plant material</li> </ul>

You can get more detailed information on the crop types and uses (known as the 'crop hierarchy') on the Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD) website at:  
[www.pesticides.gov.uk/psd\\_databases.asp?id=327](http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/psd_databases.asp?id=327)

## 1.4 What is the legal status of this code?

This code gives you advice on how to use pesticides safely.

The code has a special position in law. If you follow its advice you will be doing enough to keep within the law. But you may be able to work in a different way from the code as long as that way is just as safe.

If you are prosecuted for not following the code, a court will find you guilty unless you can show that you have obeyed the law in some other way.

### 1.5 Who should read this code?

This code should be read by everyone who uses pesticides professionally:

- on farms and holdings;
- in horticulture;
- on amenity areas, industrial areas and sports grounds; and
- in forestry.

People who provide advice or practical support, or sell and supply pesticides, should be familiar with this code.

If you use pesticides as part of your job but not to protect plants, read the Health and Safety Commission's approved 'Code of Practice on the safe use of pesticides for non-agricultural purposes' (see annex B).

This code is not for people who use pesticides in their homes or as part of their gardening hobby. These people should follow the relevant product label. They can also get general advice on using pesticides from garden centres, trade organisations like the Crop Protection Association ([www.cropprotection.org.uk](http://www.cropprotection.org.uk)) and from a wide range of other publications.

### 1.6 What other advice is available?

As well as the advice in this code and on product labels, you may need to read other advice issued by the Government, the industry or other organisations. That advice is referred to in the appropriate sections of this code. Annex B gives a list of all codes of practice, guidance notes and other advice currently available.

### 1.7 Special terms

The special terms used in this publication are explained in annex C. These terms include descriptions of methods of applying pesticides and the equipment used. You may find these helpful when deciding which certificate of competence covers a particular method of applying pesticide.