

## **More than two hundred experts from around the world will attend the 14th International HCH and Pesticides Forum**

**The General Directorate of Climate Change and Environmental Education of the Government of Aragon organizes this international forum, in collaboration with the International HCH and Pesticides Association and SARGA**

*The event will take place in Zaragoza days 21 to 24 of February, in the framework of the European project LIFE SUFING.*

The positioning of Aragon as leader of the lindane waste pollution in Europe, and the commitment acquired by this region on progressing towards the solution of the problem, has lead the General Directorate of Climate Change and Environmental Education to be host of the 14<sup>th</sup> International HCH and Pesticides Forum. The event will take place in Zaragoza days 21 to 24 of February, in the framework of the European project LIFE SUFING.

This international meeting is a discussion platform that brings together experts in Persistent Organic Pollutants, obsolete pesticides and hazardous chemical waste. The objective is to favour the knowledge transfer and the consecution of the objectives of the European Soil Strategy for 2030, whose mission is “to achieve healthy soils by 2050”.

200 people from 38 different countries will attend the event. The Program is structured in two parts, a conference and a field visit. Expositions will be held days 21 to 23 of February in the headquarters of the Caja Rural in Zaragoza. A total of 109 presentations will be organized in 14 thematic sessions. On the 24th, attendees will visit the sites of Inquinosa, Sardas and Bailin, to know first-hand the progresses made by Aragon and the works developed.

The General Director of Climate Change and Environmental Education, Carlos Gamarra; the Head of the Unit of Contaminated Soils of the Government of Aragon, Elena Cano; and the Director of the International HCH and Pesticides Association (IHPA), John Vijgen, have presented this Monday all details of the event.

“It is not a coincidence that this congress is celebrated in Zaragoza. In the last years, Aragon has been positioned as leader and an international reference in the management, research and decontamination of lindane”, Gamarra has declared during the presentation.

The International HCH and Pesticides Forum was initiated 31 years ago by IHPA, the International HCH and Pesticides Association, an independent and non-political network of committed individuals that wants to draw international attention to the worldwide problems stemming from the production and use of HCH and other obsolete pesticides and its dangers for human health and the environment.

The 14th edition, organized in the framework of the European project LIFE SURFING, focuses on the theme: *How the European Union is managing the Legacy of Lindane and HCH waste. What are the “Lessons learned” and what is the “Way forward”.*

The LIFE SURFING Project, coordinated by the Government of Aragon, with IHPA, SARGA, the Complutense University of Madrid and the University of Stuttgart as Project partners, consists in the implementation of a pilot demonstration test that aims to eliminate the dense phase of

Bailin site (Aragon). The Project results, developed in the mentioned site from 2021 to 2022, will open the programme of sessions.

### **The Aragonese example**

In the last years, the Government of Aragon is doing a great economical effort in the tasks of control, research and remediation of lindane production waste. “We have a budget of six million euros for this year, part of which comes from European funds”, Gamarra mentioned.

More than 40 people and three laboratories are available permanently in Aragon for the activities of control, research, decontamination and analysis of lindane waste.

Lastly, the Government of Aragon is achieving substantial progress on research and development remediation projects, in collaboration with 12 Universities and Research Centres, that catch the interest of experts on soil pollution. In addition to the LIFE SURFING Project, the General Direction of Climate Change and Environmental Education is coordinating other European projects such as LINDANET, a European network of regions affected by the lindane waste pollution.