

India: Thousands of Farmers Die from Mysterious Kidney Disease

19/01/2015



In India, about 20,000 people have died of the same kidney disease over the past 20 years, while 400,000 more are estimated to have symptoms. In some places, the disease could cause up to 10 victims per month, the UK daily *The Independent* reported Sunday.

However, in most cases symptoms remain subtle, and the disease is only discovered after an autopsy is performed.

An investigation by the U.N. has not been able to detect a definite cause, but it pointed to the influence of heavy metals like the cadmium in fertilizers or the arsenic in pesticides, both heavily used by the country's agricultural sector.

About a decade ago, a similar kidney disease appeared in the Americas, including El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Mexico, affecting especially young men working in sugarcane fields. Last year, researchers mentioned the role of Roundup pesticide produced by Monsanto among the possible causes.

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