

## Developed nations agree to slash use of Methyl bromide pesticide

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MONTREAL, July 1 (AFP) - Nearly 20 developed countries on Friday agreed to cut their use of methyl bromide -- a pesticide that harms the **ozone** layer -- by 20 percent in 2006 compared with 2005, the United Nations' Environment Programme (UNEP) announced.

Under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the **Ozone** Layer, all use of the harmful substance should have ended by January 1, 2005.

But European nations, the United States, Canada and Israel had asked for temporary exemptions to the phase out deadline in order to find alternative products.

"The importance of today's decision is that it maintains the downward trend in Methyl bromide use by developed countries," said Executive Director Klaus Toepfer of the UN Environment Programme, under whose auspices the Protocol was negotiated.

"This should send a positive signal to farmers and other users of Methyl bromide that alternatives are increasingly available and should be adopted as quickly as possible.

"It should also encourage developing countries to stay on track with their own efforts to phase-out this harmful substance," Toepfer said.

Developed countries in 2006 may use up to 13,000 tonnes of the pesticide, compared with 16,000 in 2005. The biggest user among them, the United States, has a quota of nearly 6,900 tonnes for 2006.

Several of the countries have asked for an extra quota of around 269 tonnes for 2006, to be decided at the next meeting in Dakar on December 12-16.