



PRESS RELEASE

MEPs put health and environment at heart of pesticides regulation

(Brussels, 12 September, 2007) - The European Parliament's Environment Committee this morning voted in favour of a more precautionary approach for the system that regulates the sale of pesticides in the EU. The European Environmental Bureau, Pesticide Action Network Europe and the Health & Environment Alliance welcome the strong emphasis MEPs have put on health and environment, greatly improving the Commission's original weak proposal.

In particular, MEPs clearly rejected the division of Europe into three zones, whereby countries would have had to accept their neighbours' pesticide authorisation decisions. "This step recognises that environmental and agricultural conditions within Europe are very diverse and that the zones would have been inconsistent. MEPs wish to enable Member States further to restrict pesticide use and better protect health and environment," said Elliott Cannell from PAN Europe.

"Pesticides are designed to kill and are deliberately released into the environment, where they build up and find their way into our bodies through food, drinking water and the air", said Catherine Ganzleben, EEB's Chemicals Policy Officer. "Reducing the most harmful pesticides and replacing them with safer alternatives is critical to ensuring the health of Europe's people, and protecting our wildlife. We therefore welcome MEPs' initiative to establish a strong link with the Water Framework Directive. Unacceptable water pollution will now trigger the review and possible withdrawal of pesticide authorisation."

The environmental and health NGOs welcome the MEPs' strong support for ensuring that neurotoxic and immunotoxic^[1] pesticides are included among the substances which are recognised as being harmful to human health and the environment and which will not be authorised. "This vote shows that Parliament has begun taking into account increasing scientific evidence that pesticide exposure, even at low doses, is a threat to people's health and even to the development of children's brains" said Monica Guarinoni, Pesticides Policy Officer at the Health & Environment Alliance (HEAL). "We would also like to see a ban on the sale of the most hazardous pesticides and on pesticide use in and around areas where children spend most of their time."

The outcome also catalyses the shift towards the use of alternatives to harmful pesticides. "MEPs voted to increase pressure for substituting harmful pesticides with safer alternatives, including non-chemical methods," said Nardono Nimpuno of the International Chemical Secretariat. The European Parliament's Plenary session in October is likely to confirm these results when MEPs will also give their opinion on a related proposal which should reduce the risks linked to pesticide use. The NGOs believe agriculture ministers should heed Parliament's signal and integrate these ideas in their deliberations for the Common Position.

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[1] Neurotoxic chemicals affect the nervous system and immunotoxic chemicals hamper the immune system, both could not only be damaging for human health, but also wildlife.