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## REPORT

Towards a thematic strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides  
(2002/2277(INI))

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy

Rapporteur: Kathleen Van Brempt



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## PROCEDURAL PAGE

By letter of 1 July 2002, the Commission forwarded to Parliament a communication to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee towards a thematic strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides (COM(2002) 349 – C5-0621/2002) which was referred to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy for information.

At the sitting of 16 January 2003 the President of Parliament announced that the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy had been authorised to draw up an own-initiative-report, pursuant to Rule 163 of the Rules of Procedure, on that subject, and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development had been asked for its opinion.

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy had appointed Kathleen Van Brempt rapporteur at its meeting of 10 September 2002.

The committee considered the Commission communication and the draft report at its meetings of 9 December 2002, 22 January and 19 February 2003.

At the latter meeting it adopted the motion for a resolution by 30 votes to 19, with no abstentions.

The following were present for the vote: Caroline F. Jackson, chairman; Alexander de Roo and Mauro Nobilia, vice-chairmen; Kathleen Van Brempt, rapporteur; María del Pilar Ayuso González, Emmanouil Bakopoulos (for Mihail Papayannakis), Hans Blokland, David Robert Bowie, John Bowis, Philip Bushill-Matthews (for Martin Callanan), Dorette Corbey, Chris Davies, Avril Doyle, Anne Ferreira, Karl-Heinz Florenz, Cristina García-Orcoyen Tormo, Anne-Karin Glase (for Eija-Riitta Anneli Korhola), Laura González Álvarez, Robert Goodwill, Françoise Grossetête, Jutta D. Haug (for Torben Lund), Marie Anne Isler Béguin, Hedwig Keppelhoff-Wiechert (for Raffaele Costa), Hans Kronberger, Bernd Lange, Paul A.A.J.G. Lannoye (for Hiltrud Breyer), Peter Liese, Giorgio Lisi (for Marialiese Flemming), Jules Maaten, Minerva Melpomeni Malliori, Patricia McKenna, Erik Meijer (for Pernille Frahm), Emilia Franziska Müller, Riitta Myller, Angelika Niebler (for Jorge Moreira da Silva), Ria G.H.C. Oomen-Ruijten, Marit Paulsen, Dagmar Roth-Behrendt, Guido Sacconi, Yvonne Sandberg-Fries, Giacomo Santini (for Cristina Gutiérrez Cortines), Karin Scheele, Inger Schörling, Jonas Sjöstedt, Renate Sommer (for Christa Kläß), María Sornosa Martínez, Catherine Stihler, Peder Wachtmeister, Phillip Whitehead.

The opinion of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development is attached.

The report was tabled on 3 March 2003.

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

### European Parliament resolution Towards a thematic strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides (2002/2277(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Commission communication Towards a Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (COM(2002) 349 - C5-0621/2002),
- having regard to the Commission communication Towards a Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection (COM(2002) 179),
- having regard to Council Directive 91/414/EEC of 15 July 1991 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the European Parliament and Council Directive 98/8<sup>2</sup> of 16 February 1998 concerning the placing of biocidal products on the market,
- having regard to Council Directives 76/895/EEC<sup>3</sup>, 86/362/EEC<sup>4</sup>, 86/363/EEC<sup>5</sup> and 90/642/EEC<sup>6</sup> on the fixing of maximum levels for pesticide residues in and on fruit and vegetables, cereals and foodstuffs of animal origin,
- having regard to European Parliament and Council Directive 2000/60/EC of 23 October 2000<sup>7</sup> establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water and the water quality objectives laid down therein,
- having regard to Council Directive 98/83/EC<sup>8</sup> of 3 November 1998 on the quality of water intended for human consumption,
- having regard to Council Directive 75/440/EEC<sup>9</sup> of 16 June 1975 concerning the quality required of surface water intended for the abstraction of drinking water in the Member States,
- having regard to the report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council entitled: 'Evaluation of the active substances of plant protection products (submitted

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 230, 19.8.1991, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 123, 24.4.1998 p. 1-63

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 340, 9.12.1976, p. 26

<sup>4</sup> OJ L 221, 7.8.1986, p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> OJ L 221, 7.8.1986, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> OJ L 350, 14.12.1990, p. 71.

<sup>7</sup> OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1-73

<sup>8</sup> OJ L 330, 5.12.1998, p. 32-54

<sup>9</sup> OJ L 194, 25.7.1975, p. 26-31.

in accordance with Article 8(2) of Council Directive 91/414/EEC on the placing of plant production products on the market) (COM(2001) 444),

- having regard to its Resolution of 30 May 2002<sup>1</sup> on the Commission report on the evaluation of the active substances of plant protection products and to the Commission's reply to this Resolution,
- having regard to Decision 1600/2002/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 July 2002 laying down the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to the resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 1 February 1993 on an Community programme of policy and action in relation to the environment and sustainable development - A European Community programme of policy and action in relation to the environment and sustainable development (The Fifth EC Environmental Action Programme)<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the communication from the Commission: Progress Report on implementation of the European Community Programme of Policy and Action in relation to the environment and sustainable development "towards sustainability" (COM(1995) 624),
- having regard to Decision 2179/98/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 24 September 1998 on the review of the European Community Programme of Policy and Action in relation to the environment and sustainable development "Towards Sustainability"<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to the proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and the Council on environmental liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage (COM(2002) 17);
- having regard to the synthesis report of the European Commission entitled "Possibilities for future EU environmental policy on PPP's" (1997),
- having regard to the Convention on the Protection of the Rhine and the provision made therein for safeguarding the use of water from the Rhine to supply drinking water,
- having regard to the report of the WHO and EEA entitled " Children's Health and Environment: A Review of Evidence" (2002),
- having regard to Rules 47(2) and 163 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy and the opinion of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (A5-0061/2003),

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<sup>1</sup> P5\_TA(2002) 0276

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 242, 10.9.2002, p. 1-15

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 138/5, 17.5.1993

<sup>4</sup> OJ L 275, 10.10.1998, p. 1-13

- A. whereas there is broad consensus that the existing legal framework does not provide for a sustainable use of pesticides and that it is therefore necessary to complement it by a comprehensive Community strategy explicitly designed to achieve this goal,
- B. whereas pesticides residues can be found in all environmental media, residues in food are found in approximately 40 % of the samples and multiple residues in 15%,
- C. whereas pesticide contamination of European groundwater, which represents 65% of Europeans' raw drinking water, is of particular concern,
- D. whereas the limit of 0.1 µg/l for pesticides in drinking water which applies to groundwater and surface waters is frequently exceeded, which gives rise to high treatment costs,
- E. whereas pesticides contribute to a loss of biodiversity and possible health effects of authorised pesticides include immunological effects, endocrine disrupting effects, neurotoxicological disorders and various types of cancer,
- F. whereas fetuses and children are both more vulnerable and more exposed to pesticides than adults; the current evaluation and MRLs are probably inadequate to ensure safety for this vulnerable group,
- G. whereas since 1996 there has been a general increase in the use of pesticides in the EU,
- H. whereas a reduction in the use of, and dependence on, pesticides is also necessary in order to minimise problems relating to pest resistance, secondary pest problems and the depletion of agricultural soils,
- I. whereas the adoption of alternative pest control methods and a reduction of farmers' dependence on pesticides, including organic farming, has proven to be profitable in economic terms and agriculturally sustainable and would be even more so if the external costs of pesticides were internalised, for example via fees,
- J. whereas a sustainable use of pesticides is not likely to be achieved solely by encouraging the Member States and whereas there is a need to achieve a level playing field at a European level for all farmers and an equal level of health, environmental protection and food safety; the EU should therefore define comprehensive mandatory requirements in keeping with the general principle that European Union law should not weaken existing laws on environmental protection and, in this instance, taking into account the very different climatic conditions, crops, soil and other factors affecting agriculture, these mandatory requirements should take the form of minimum standards and should in no instance lead to an increase in the permissible levels of use of particular pesticides,
- K. whereas some Member States have effectively reduced the amounts of pesticides used and the risks associated with their use; whereas discrepancies between Member States still exist resulting in a non-level playing field and unfair competition between farmers in different Member States,

- L. whereas improved knowledge of the individual pesticide user is a prerequisite for changing behaviour and hence training, education and the dissemination of information should be a crucial element of the thematic strategy and for the training of farmers and operators a comprehensive framework/guidelines are needed,
1. Welcomes the overdue Communication but regrets the lack of ambition, the fact that few legally binding measures and no economic instruments are proposed and the lengthy timetable for adoption and implementation;
  2. Reaffirms the calls made in its resolution of 30 May 2002 for the revision of pesticides legislation with a view to pesticide risk reduction; furthermore, stresses the need for urgent and mandatory complementary action on pesticide use reduction and therefore calls on the Commission to speed up the process of developing binding and effective measures, and to define clear goals and timetables for each Member State, guided by an overall and indicative quantitative target of 50% reduction of use within 10 years, as measured by indicators such as the frequency of application;
  3. Urges the Commission to extend the scope of the thematic strategy to non-agricultural pesticides and all user groups such as industry, local authorities, private households and to biocides, while adhering to the timetable foreseen for the adoption of the thematic strategy;
  4. Stresses the need for mandatory national use and risk reduction programmes, including quantitative reduction targets to be achieved by adopting a mix of mandatory and voluntary measures; these programmes should contain among others the following elements:
    - an assessment of the existing situation regarding pesticide use and impacts and of the consequences of the implementation of various reduction scenarios including cost-benefit analysis for these scenarios which include evaluation of the external costs on a scientific basis;
    - national or regional action plans designed to reduce pesticides use, risks and dependence, including quantitative and qualitative goals derived from standards laid down in directives concerning the environment, water, drinking water and food safety, for all user groups such as agriculture, industry, local authorities, public services and households;
    - measures to raise awareness, including information campaigns, advisory services development, mandatory basic and continued training and certification of all professional users, advisory officers and dealers with particular emphasis on low-pesticide pest-control systems and non-chemical alternatives, and special information for private purchasers;
    - definition of Integrated Crop Management standards for each major crop by independent experts and expanded financial support for the development of various biological alternatives, the crops' own resistance and farming methods capable of minimising the use of pesticides; such measures to include risk avoidance technology and assessment;



- mandatory requirements relating to the technical equipment, preparation, storage and application as well as measures to control and monitor compliance with these requirements;
  - designation of pesticide vulnerable zones where use is banned or severely restricted such as drinking water collection or abstraction zones and areas protected under the Habitats and Birds Directives;
  - mandatory and frequent monitoring of pesticides concentrations in environmental media as well as of residues in food in a harmonised way;
  - financial instruments such as levies on pesticides;
  - regular progress reports by Member States on the implementation of the reduction programmes;
5. Considers that national action plans must also cover:
    - licensing procedures for chemical soil decontamination,
    - the use and approval of spraying equipment,
    - crop protection licences,
    - in the case of sensitive crops, drift reduction measures,
    - disease prevention measures;
  6. Calls on the Commission to propose a legally binding EU-wide pesticides pass in which the producer indicates the use of all pesticides in agriculture and in the storage of each product in order to enable appropriate food controls to be carried out; there must be provision for sanctions, should false or incomplete information be supplied;
  7. Fully supports the recommendation for a ban on aerial spraying and the possibility to designate pesticide free zones but urges the Commission also to propose a ban on the use in special protection zones such as for drinking water abstraction, on the use of pesticides in schools, playgrounds and parks in order to protect children, and in areas close to inhabited zones; calls on the Commission to present such proposals before the end of 2003;
  8. Asks the Commission to establish a system of compulsory protection zones for all surface water at European level and set a mandatory minimum safety distance of 3 meters, whereas the protection zones should be adjusted at regional level in order to take the specific characteristics of the region and the potential risks into account;
  9. Demands an improved monitoring by the Member States of pesticide concentrations in the various environmental media, including on food products, in accordance with Community guidelines, and also an approximation of information systems relating to contamination caused by pesticides, and stresses the necessity to conduct further research on the environmental impacts and on the effects which pesticide use has on health;

10. Urges the Commission to set up EU-wide databases containing all national monitoring data and all available non-chemical alternatives; these databases should be made accessible to the public and information actively disseminated;
11. Urges the Commission to expand financial support of research and promotion activities specifically intended to develop alternative pest control methods and systems;
12. Notes that there exists a variety of indicators, including sales volumes, use volumes, use patterns, treatment frequency, residues in food and environmental media, the percentage of land in organic farming and the percentage of farmers adopting ICM, which, if used in combination, are suitable for measuring progress and calls on the Commission to use those indicators while continuing to work on the development of agreed environmental load indicators;
13. Stresses the need to collect, in an harmonised way, sales and use data for all user categories as well as import and export data, and to make publicly available all information per active ingredient;
14. Calls on the Commission to propose an increase in consumers' right to information, for example by setting up a system of regular publication of measurements of residues in fresh food products from supermarkets and other retail outlets and by giving consumers the right to put questions to food producers and distributors concerning the composition and method of production of food;
15. Stresses the need to introduce the concept of producer or importer responsibility for the recovery and safe disposal of all pesticide packaging, pesticides past their expiry date and revoked pesticide products by way of a mandatory deposit-refund system;
16. Asks the Commission to address the specific problems arising from filling and cleaning as important point sources of emissions and to propose measures to collect and treat remaining pesticides; calls for particular attention to be paid to the use of pesticides in containers for the shipment of goods and the health and safety risk for those who treat those containers or who are in the vicinity of those containers;
17. Calls on the Commission to draw up guidelines for training and advice for pesticide users as regards reducing the risks stemming from pesticide use, taking account of the differences which exist between the various European regions;
18. Underlines that programmes for basic and further training should focus on risks for human health and the environment, alternative methods and finally safe and minimised use;
19. Draws attention to the major importance - not least for sustainable use and risk reduction - of speedy European evaluation of active substances in plant protection products; emphasises that this re-evaluation must take place within strict deadlines and that sufficient human and other resources must be allocated to the task;

20. Emphasises again the need to include, in the revision of Directive 91/414, the substitution principle, the precautionary principle and comparative assessment (including non-chemical alternatives), but notes that this principle should also be the basis for action at national level;
21. Urges the Commission to coordinate the internal work on drawing up the proposals for a thematic strategy and an amended Directive 91/414. In particular, this applies to the need to remove obstacles in Directive 91/414 to Member States' using bans or restrictions on individual plant protection products to achieve sustainable use and reduce dependence on chemical agents in food production. Such restrictions must be dealt with directly in the proposal for a revision of the Directive which is being drawn up;
22. Urges the Commission to draw up a new policy for pesticides in line with the forthcoming EU chemicals policy on the basis of the principles advocated in the Council's conclusions of June 2001, with particular focus on substances which are carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction and substances which are persistent, bioaccumulating and toxic or which otherwise give cause for serious concern, particularly endocrine-disrupting substances and VPVB (very persistent, very bioaccumulating) substances. These substances should, in principle, be avoided in plant protection products. Consistency between the revision of Regulation 92/2455/EEC and this Directive should also be taken into account;
23. Calls on the Commission to introduce measures to remove financial barriers in the approval and registration of new and alternative products such as biological control agents and organic products, without compromising safety;
24. Stresses the need for preference to be given, whenever possible, to organic methods of pest control and to the use of sound farming practices (in particular crop rotation, weeding and a reduction in the amounts of pesticide applied), rather than to the systematic use of pesticides, and for products which are known to be hazardous to be replaced by more selective, less persistent and more biodegradable products;
25. Considers an integrated crop protection policy to be an absolute necessity for the sustainable use of pesticides, and that to this end attention must be paid to:
  - safeguards by means of certification and by closing the crop protection circuit,
  - improving levels of knowledge about crop protection,
  - promoting innovation, as regards both agricultural and horticultural systems on the one hand and the products used on the other;
26. Urges the Commission to set concrete and mandatory targets and timetables for ICM and sustainable organic agriculture; while IPM should be made mandatory for all public authorities; notes however that there is still a lack of consensus among stakeholders on the meaning of the terms Integrated Crop Management (ICM) and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and insists that the Commission lay down clear definitions and minimum criteria in this respect and set deadlines for the mandatory application of ICM on all cultivated land not yet in organic farming; asks Member States to lay down minimum IPM/ICM measures for each crop;

27. Calls on the Commission to propose ICM/IPM as a common basic requirement for the licensing of any pesticide;
28. Urges Member States to exploit fully the provisions laid down in Regulation 1259/1999 and insists that financial incentives for conversion to low-input and organic agriculture should be strengthened;
29. Requests the Commission to reform the Common Agricultural Policy in order to make it compatible with the goal of sustainable pesticide use and requests that ICM becomes a prerequisite for subsidies in the future;
30. Stresses the importance of the precautionary principle in relation with genetically modified organisms in agriculture and notes that GMO's are not proven to be a sustainable alternative, taking into account inter alia the possible increased pesticide consumption, the effects on bio-diversity, the spread of resistant genes and incompatibility with organic farming in the neighbourhood of GMO farming;
31. Urges the Commission to develop a regulatory framework for taxes and/or other levies on pesticides; the revenues raised should be used to support conversion to IPM, ICM and sustainable organic farming methods, education and training, to raise awareness and to finance research;
32. Welcomes the proposed elimination of provisions allowing Member States to apply reduced VAT rates for pesticides;
33. Calls on the Commission to develop an EU-wide fund financed by both Member States and industry in order to ensure a safe disposal of stocks of obsolete pesticides in candidate countries; requests the Commission to lead global action and enforce producer responsibility to prevent future stocks;
34. Stresses that development aid should focus on capacity building within third countries and on minimisation of pesticide use, organic agriculture, ICM and IPM;
35. Urges the Commission to set maximum residues levels (MRL's) at an extremely low level (analytical detection limit) unless the notifier can prove that even the best available techniques and methods cannot prevent a certain residue level;
36. Urges the Member States to measure residues in fresh food products in order to promote transparency and consumers' right to product information;
37. Calls on the Commission to amend European trading standards relating to the shape, size and aesthetic qualities of fresh fruit and vegetables which encourage the intensive use of pesticides;
38. Urges the Commission to take into account the extremely worrying issue of mortality amongst domestic bees – a problem associated with the use of certain systemic insecticides (containing the active substances Fipronil and Imidaclopride) in order to treat sunflower and maize seeds;

39. Urges the Commission, therefore by means of its resolution of 30 May 2002 on the Commission report entitled: 'Evaluation of the active substances of plant protection products (submitted in accordance with Article 8(2) of Council Directive 91/414/EEC on the placing of plant protection products on the market' to ensure that the criteria for the assessment of pesticides specifically include an analysis of the impact which the active substances contained have on domestic bee populations and the observations made by beekeepers' trade organisations concerning those substances;
40. Urges the Commission to design its thematic strategy as an umbrella for existing and future legislation and to propose an effective and enforceable mix of instruments that complement and reinforce each other and, at the same time, put forward legislative proposals; requests the Commission, in so doing, to respect the principle that European Union law should not weaken existing environmental protection and, in this instance, to take into account the different climatic conditions, crops, soil and other factors affecting agriculture, and to ensure that any requirements take the form of minimum standards;
41. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

### 1. Introduction

The Fifth Environmental Action Programme (1993-2000) laid down the objective to achieve 'a significant reduction in the use of pesticides before 2000'. Subsequently, eight studies were conducted during 1994-1998 resulting in the conclusion that there is an urgent need to define a comprehensive policy framework at European level. The Commission adopted, with a delay of three years, this Communication designed to launch a consultation procedure on the basis of which a thematic strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides will be drawn up by 2004. According to Art. 7 of the Sixth Environmental Action Programme the main objective of the thematic strategy is to reduce the impacts of pesticides on human health and the environment and, more generally, to achieve a sustainable use of pesticides as well as a significant overall reduction in risks and of the use of pesticides, consistent with the necessary crop protection. We welcome this communication as it contains many elements needed to move towards a sustainable use of pesticides, but regret the lack of ambition, the lack of legally binding measures, as well as the proposed timeframe.

### 2. Background

Pesticides are toxic chemicals deliberately released into the environment in order to kill or control unwanted pests. They can nowadays be found in all environmental media and contamination of groundwater is of particular concern. Pesticides contribute to a loss of biodiversity and are a major factor in the decline of bird populations, amphibians, insect populations, etc. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that pesticides are causing each year about 3.000.000 cases of illness and 220.000 deaths worldwide, including only the acute effects. Long-term health effects range from increased vulnerability to diseases, impaired development and reproduction (e.g. lower sperm quality), various types of cancer, changes in behaviour and depression. There exists an extensive body of scientific literature on the effects of pesticides on different biota and human health.

The present dependence on pesticides as the dominant means of controlling pests clearly is not compatible with sustainable agriculture for several reasons. Firstly, the prolonged use of pesticides frequently leads to pests becoming resistant. Secondly, pesticides have the side effect of killing beneficial organisms that play an important role in preventing pests and often lead to the outbreak of secondary pests. Both factors may result in further increases of the use of pesticides. Finally, pesticides destroy the biodiversity of agricultural soil, which is essential for a sustainable food production.

The Commission stated in its Communication that "the risks associated with pesticides are accepted by society because there is a significant economic benefit related to their use". Contrary to the costs however, the economic benefits do not accrue to society as a whole and pesticides are not accepted by society as a whole. This is why drinking water companies, consumer, environmental and some agricultural organisations as well as health associations are pleading for use and risk reductions. The criterion for consumers to consider food as 'safe' is the absence of pesticide residues. In reality, about 40 % of the food samples contain residues.

Since 1996, the use of pesticides has steadily increased. The total yearly sales in the EU amounted to 327.000 tons of active ingredients (a.i.) in 1999. The need for an additional sustainable use policy as complementary to the existing regulatory framework had already been agreed upon in 1998 by consensus on the occasion of a EU wide stakeholder meeting. We believe that the EU cannot afford a further delay. It's time to act.

### **3. Elements of a thematic strategy**

#### **a) Timetable and goals**

The Commission intends to propose a thematic strategy in 2004. Concrete legislative proposals will be made 2 years later, i.e. in 2006. Given the lengthy decision making procedure within the EU institutions, the deadlines for transposition and the time needed to translate it into concrete action, there is a need to speed up this process. Therefore the Commission should have proposals for legally binding measures ready at the same time as the thematic strategy in 2004.

In its Communication, the Commission does not explicitly refer to the objective of reducing the overall use of pesticides. Some observations have to be made in this respect. Several Member States (Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands) have adopted national programs to reduce pesticides use. In these countries use reduction is seen as one of the means to reduce risk. Moreover, the policy objective of reducing the use of pesticides makes it easier to define quantitative targets and to measure the progress made towards achieving these targets. Risk reductions, on the other hand, can also be achieved through end-of-pipe solutions, for instance by removing pesticides from drinking water. This, however does not correspond with neither the "prevention at source principle" nor the "polluter pays principle". It should be noted that use reduction, expressed in volume of a.i., alone will not be sufficient either, as low dose pesticides application is not necessarily less problematic.

Therefore the thematic strategy should aim for an overall reduction in the use of, and dependence on, pesticides. Secondly, it should strive for an effective minimisation and control of the remaining risks.

#### **b) Scope**

The Commission restricts the scope of its Communication to the use of plant protection products (ppp's) in agriculture. No measures were proposed for other users, nor does it cover biocides. The Commission estimates that the use of ppp's outside agriculture accounts for 2% of the overall use. This percentage is expected to be significantly higher if complete data were available regarding local governments, industry, railway companies, and households. Although different approaches might have to be applied for different user groups and for biocides, it is appropriate to include them in the scope of the thematic strategy.

#### **c) Mandatory instruments**

The Commission proposes that all Member States establish national reduction plans. It is of crucial importance to make such plans mandatory. Measures taken at national level might lead to unfair competition and therefore we need a level playing field by setting up EU wide mandatory

requirements rather than merely encouraging Member States to take action. The proposal should foresee both mandatory and voluntary elements for national/regional programs, but the Commission proposals to reduce risks to health and environment (section VI.1) should be made mandatory.

#### d) Control on the use and distribution

All measures proposed by the Commission in this context are important and therefore are supported. The current lack of accurate data (partly due to the fact that many data are considered as confidential) poses serious problems. Not only drinking water companies rely on data concerning the sales and use of active ingredients to identify appropriate treatment options but the lack of accurate data impedes research on epidemiological and environmental effects of pesticides. Consequently, it is of key importance to make data on active ingredients available.

Several test programmes in MS have indicated that application equipment was more defective than expected with the consequence that more pesticides are being used than necessary. Minimum EU criteria for application equipment and controls are therefore necessary together with the introduction of mandatory testing of application equipment.

#### e) Agriculture

All the measures in the context of agri-environmental schemes, training and awareness raising of farmers, combined with a more rigorous implementation of 1259/1999 are important, but should be complemented by additional instruments. The promotion of IPM, ICM and organic farming should be the cornerstone of the EU-strategy and it is important to make the CAP compatible with the goals of a future pesticides strategy.

A great majority of genetically modified crops are made resistant against herbicides. Agrochemical companies promised that these GM crops could significantly contribute to reducing the use and risk of pesticides. However, studies in the US have shown that the use of GM crops did not reduce pesticides use. On the contrary, significant increases have been observed in some instances. Furthermore, GM crops can cause new problems, for example through the migration of resistance genes and make organic agriculture impossible in their vicinity. Current GM-technology is therefore not likely to be a safe and sustainable alternative.

Farmers all over the world have shown that adopting alternative pest control methods has proven to be beneficial in economic terms. The shift towards alternative pest control methods will take time but will be essential to enhance soil quality, to minimise resistance problems and to reduce secondary pest outbreaks. With a view to effectively changing behaviour patterns, pesticide users must be given the necessary knowledge in order to understand the issue and know how to solve it. It is therefore important not only to fund research but to actively disseminate the available information. In this respect, awareness raising regarding impacts on human health and the environment as well as regarding alternative methods is crucial. Essential for the success is therefore an extensive agricultural research, reliable and independent information about ways to reduce dependence and a strong participation of farmers. Much attention should be paid to the development of disease warning systems, to reducing the dominance of disease-susceptible varieties, to improving regional diversity and to the extension of IPM/ICM techniques and organic agriculture. To make this possible, national reduction plans and economic instruments of



which the revenues can be earmarked for financial support to farmers in conversion should be made mandatory at EU level.

#### f) Levies

Despite the strong theoretical arguments in favour of the introduction of economic instruments and the available evidence of their effectiveness, the Commission did not propose them in its Communication. The reasons given in this respect are flawed. The fact that we do not have full information on the long-term adverse effects of pesticides and the exact amount of the external cost associated with them, does not justify it to stay away from the introduction of a steering tax, the level of which would approximate the real amount of externalities.

The total social and environmental costs associated with pesticide use in US were estimated 10 years ago to be approximately 2.5 to 4 billion dollars a year. In order to internalise these external costs in accordance with the polluter pays principle, levies should play a key role as part of a broader policy mix. They would give an incentive to reduce pesticides use, require less controls than other measures and raise the revenue necessary to finance other measures MS will have to adopt with regard to financial support for conversion, training and awareness raising.

#### g) Candidate countries

Stocks of obsolete pesticides are widespread and form a severe threat to human health and the environment as they are often left under poor management and control. The CEE-countries should be assisted technically and financially in the production of nation wide inventories localising and identifying the pesticides followed by a prioritised treatment. Therefore the EU should develop an EU-wide fund financed by contributions of Member States and industry to help finance these programmes for safe disposal.

Finally, it should be noted that in many rural areas of the CEE-countries, the use of pesticides is relatively low. The EU should ensure that the implementation of the CAP in CEE-countries does not lead to an increased use.

### **4. Conclusion**

There is no one policy tool or instrument that in itself will achieve the goal of a sustainable use of pesticides. Basic legislation is needed at European level in which common overall reduction objectives should be defined. These should be complemented by a mix of measures taken in the framework of mandatory national reduction programmes as well as educational instruments, financial support, levies, research and control and monitoring. To this end, the Commission should present legislative proposals at the same time the thematic strategy is proposed.

23 January 2003

## **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy

Towards a thematic strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides  
(2002/2277(INI))

Draftsman: Encarnación Redondo Jiménez

### **PROCEDURE**

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development appointed Encarnación Redondo Jiménez draftsman at its meeting of 10 December 2002.

The committee considered the draft opinion at its meeting of 23 January 2003.

At that meeting it adopted the following conclusions by 25 votes to 1.

The following were present for the vote: Joseph Daul, (chairman); María Rodríguez Ramos, vice-chairman; Encarnación Redondo Jiménez, (draftsman); Gordon J. Adam, Carlos Bautista Ojeda, Arlindo Cunha, Christel Fiebiger, Francesco Fiori, Christos Folias, Georges Garot, Lutz Goepel, Willi Görlach, Elisabeth Jeggle, Salvador Jové Peres, Hedwig Keppelhoff-Wiechert, Heinz Kindermann, Dimitrios Koulourianos, Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler (for António Campos), Vincenzo Lavarra, Xaver Mayer, Jan Mulder (for Niels Busk), Emilia Franziska Müller (for Michl Ebner), Karl Erik Olsson, Mikko Pesälä, Isidoro Sánchez García, Giovanni Procacci and Dominique F.C. Souchet.

## **SHORT JUSTIFICATION**

### **1. Risk involved in using pesticides**

The communication under review corresponds to the general guidelines contained in the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme. Nevertheless, its main objective is to reduce the risks which may be posed by pesticides for agricultural use, and it pays less attention to guaranteeing the necessary protection for crops against pests.

This omission could already be seen in the report evaluating active substances in plant protection products, which took account of the difficulty of maintaining a sufficient number of insecticides on the market without mentioning any possible action to remedy the situation.

The same focus can be seen in the communication, which states, with no solid basis, that the problem of sustainability is chiefly linked to pesticides for agricultural use. It is logical to assume that it is much more important to bring about the sustainable use of non-agricultural pesticides, and biocides in general, in densely populated areas.

Furthermore, the Commission uses statistical data which have been obtained without a harmonised procedure guaranteeing comparability. Even worse, it does not identify any need to improve this vital information system.

### **2. Failure to take account of regional differences**

The communication is based on the study drawn up by Dutch institutions, without consulting the authorities of all the Member States. As a consequence, it reflects the environmental issues linked to a certain system of production, and the measures outlined are not at all suited to the special features of the various European regions.

### **3. Dissuasive levies**

Even though the Commission states that it has no intention of pushing for an increase in levies on pesticide consumption, it outlines the various types of levies applied.

Its communication makes no mention of the significant investment required for the approval of active substances, nor the costs arising from the application of the rules on waste packaging of plant-health products, nor an assessment of the repercussions which these costs might have on the price of pesticides.

It appears appropriate that the VAT rate applicable should be harmonised, but there should be no upward harmonisation without first assessing the impact which the cost of evaluating active substances and managing packaging has on the price of pesticides.

### **4. Gradual application of financial instruments**

The Commission is in favour of encouraging the use of financial instruments, in particular compensation under the CAP, in order to ensure the sustainable use of pesticides. This measure should be applied in stages, both in conventional and organic farming, in parallel with the

introduction of integrated production, since otherwise the situation of many farms might be jeopardised.

## **5. New means of production**

The Commission does not appreciate the problem which agriculture will face if a large number of active substances are withdrawn as a consequence of the review being made, nor the problems which might arise for some crops from the reduction of doses for pest control. Provision should be made for approving means of production which are not yet available for European farmers, particularly genetically modified varieties, which might contribute to a more sustainable use of pesticides.

## **6. Lack of common guidelines**

The Commission envisages measures relating to training and advice for pesticide users and for the application of integrated pest control. These measures might ultimately vary widely between states and regions unless guidelines are drawn up on:

- training and advice for pesticide users, particularly on the reduction of risks stemming from the use of pesticides;
- the development and application of integrated pest control within the framework of integrated production and in keeping with the differences which exist in EU systems of agriculture.

## **7. Programme monitoring**

Appropriate indicators are vital in order to gauge the effectiveness of national plans. The Commission gives a rather confused explanation of such indicators and their possible benefits. However, it must be made clear that the total dose applied is a basic indicator, and a more precise breakdown would be preferable in terms of its impact on the environment. Moreover, bearing in mind that various types of measures may be implemented to ensure sustainability, suitable indicators need to be developed to assess their impact.

The Commission must also make provision for reviewing the proposed measures in the light of the results achieved, since it is evident that, when a certain type of measure has been applied for several years, adjustments will lead to situations which make a review necessary.

# **CONCLUSIONS**

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following points in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the Commission's swift response to the demands made in the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme;
2. Considers that it is essential for the legislator to introduce provisions such as regulations on

the authorisation of active substances and applications, MRLs, soil and water quality and working conditions; fears, however, that the Commission communication advocates too many binding provisions that will result in bureaucracy and an excessive administrative burden and will unduly restrict the freedom of citizens;

3. Calls on the Commission to consider the need to take account of the special characteristics of the various European regions, for example in identifying pesticide-free zones near watercourses, and to apply appropriate alternative measures, for which purpose it should seek the cooperation of the Member States; in this context consideration should also be given to the possibility of a regional authorisation policy for plant protection products, under which a single authorisation procedure can cover a product in several Member States with comparable climatic conditions;
4. Stresses the need to bring about the sustainable use of all pesticides and of alternative means used, for instance, in organic farming, and urges the Commission to draw up an appropriate strategy as soon as possible for non-agricultural pesticides and biocides in general;
5. Points out that some programmes already adopted, such as the review of active substances in pesticides and the management of waste packaging, are having an impact on the final cost of these products, which means that introducing additional taxes could have a serious effect on the competitiveness of European farmers; is in favour of the proposal to harmonise VAT rates for pesticides as this will improve conditions of competition between farmers in the Member States;
6. Is opposed to a tax on plant protection products as further taxation of such inputs - which are unfortunately necessary in many cases - will not produce the desired effect, namely a reduction in the risk to the environment, human and animal health from the use of such products;
7. Demands that economic instruments should be applied in such a way that they do not bring about any significant change in the proper economic balance of farms and that, at all events, the practice of integrated production should be fostered in both conventional and organic farming;
8. Calls on the Commission to promote the acceptance of means not yet available for European farmers, such as many genetically modified varieties, which might help bring about the sustainable use of pesticides in agriculture; recalls, in this connection, the European Parliament's recent approval of lifting the existing moratorium on GMOs when it adopted the report on 'Life Sciences and Biotechnology – A Strategy for Europe';
9. Calls on the Commission to draw up guidelines for training and advice for pesticide users as regards reducing the risks stemming from pesticide use, taking account of the differences which exist between the various European regions;
10. Considers it necessary to lay down guidelines for the development and implementation of integrated pest management within the framework of integrated production, compatible with the needs of agriculture, so that they can be incorporated into the national plans;

11. Considers it appropriate to introduce a transparent system of information and indicators on the sustainable use of pesticides, which could be used when considering the effects of the various types of measure applicable;
12. Asks that consideration be given to the possibility of reviewing the measures adopted at Community level in the light of the effects they have on the diverse range of Community agricultural production;
13. Supports the proposal to tie integrated pest management (IPM) on certified farms to the cross-compliance proposals within the framework of the mid-term review;
14. Draws attention in this context to the major importance - not least for sustainable use and risk reduction - of speedy European evaluation of active substances in plant protection products; emphasises that this re-evaluation must take place within strict deadlines and that sufficient human and other resources must be allocated to the task.