



PRESS RELEASE

EU Parliament's modest crack-down on pesticides

(Brussels, 26 June 2007) - The Environment Committee today voted for an improvement on the proposed Thematic Strategy and Framework Directive on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides. Environmental and health groups EEB, Friends of the Earth Europe, Health & Environment Alliance and Pesticides Action Network Europe, are glad that Members of the European Parliament have successfully brought in some positive measures to reduce total exposure to and risks from pesticides. The improved proposals received overwhelming cross-party support. If carried, they will contribute to curbing the increasing over-use of pesticides in Europe and will guarantee greater protection for health and the environment.

Pesticides, which are by definition toxic, are released into the environment, and come into direct contact with users, bystanders and residents. "The most effective way to reduce our exposure to and dependency on pesticides is to reduce the quantity used," said Grazia Cioci, PAN Europe's Campaign Coordinator. "MEPs asked to make agriculture less dependent on powerful chemicals by demanding tangible quantitative use-reduction targets. However, MEPs failed to introduce solid measures such as mandatory implementation of crop-specific standards for Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and a general ban on aerial spraying."

The Environment Committee backed measures to tackle the special vulnerability of infants, children and pregnant women. "This vote shows that Parliament is taking practical action to address mounting evidence that pesticide exposure even at low doses is a threat to people's health, especially children and other vulnerable groups" said Monica Guarinoni, Pesticides Policy Officer at the Health & Environment Alliance (HEAL). "Banning pesticide use in around places where children spend most of their time, like playgrounds, parks and outside their homes, is a substantive measure and a welcome step forward."

"We need greater access to information on the risks caused by pesticide exposure," said Aleksandra Kordecka, Chemicals Campaigner at Friends of the Earth Europe. "MEPs will have another chance to show how serious they are about reducing hazardous pesticides on the EU market when they vote on the pesticide authorisation scheme next month."

Pesticides sprayed from planes remain in the air a long time and drift away from their target. They reach people in both towns and the countryside and end up in rivers, lakes and other eco-systems. "Pesticides are a major source of water pollution in the EU, but today MEPs sought to make the pesticides industry financially liable for the environmental damage it causes," said Mecki Naschke, EEB's Chemical Policy Officer.

MEPs asked Member States to adopt financial instruments such as a levy to finance the development of Integrated Pest Management.

NGOs hope that all of Parliament and Member States will carry all these positive initiatives forward.

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[1] See HEAL/PAN Europe briefing "Cutting back on pesticides for healthier lives" at http://www.env-health.org/IMG/pdf/Briefing_Feb_2007_FINAL-2.pdf

See also: <http://www.pan-europe.info>