

Member of the European Parliament
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium

Brussels, 1st March 2017

Open letter: MEPs must support amendments proposed in the Commission Delegated Regulation 639/2014 to ban pesticides on EFAs.

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

We the above organisations encourage you to say ‘yes’ to the European Commission proposal to ban pesticide use in Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) and support the respective amendments to the delegated (EU) Regulation 639/2014, as proposed by the European Commission.

In the 2013 reform of the CAP, the idea of a greening component was introduced, whereby larger farms must provide areas “*to safeguard and improve biodiversity on farms*” within EFAs. This is a concept which could be considered similar to the ‘sensitive areas’ agreed upon in the Cardiff European Council (June 1998) almost 20 years ago, when the first, tentative steps towards sustainable agriculture in the EU were taken - with recognition that pesticides negatively influence on biodiversity protection, among others. [1]

More recently, the European Environment Agency’s State and Outlook Report 2015 reaffirms the importance of biodiversity and climate action to food security and warns of serious risks if new greening measures fail to address the growing pressures of intensive agriculture on our agro-ecosystems and the wider environment due to flexibility granted to Member States in their implementation. Furthermore, the latest IUCN Red List of Threatened Species highlights the continuing negative impacts that agro-industrial practices are having on key species such as bees and birds, important indicators of farmland sustainability.

The Commission proposal to ban the use of pesticides in Ecological Focus Areas is therefore the bare minimum in restoring some credibility to the word “*Ecological*” in “*Ecological Focus Areas*”, which will progressively contribute long-term benefits for agriculture itself. Pollinators and insect predators, depending on these EFAs, provide pollination and pest control services and are indeed vital to agricultural productivity. As leguminous crops are particularly attractive to wild bees and other beneficial insects, applying pesticides on EFAs is extremely harmful to biodiversity, creating actual death traps for the beneficial natural insect life [3]. The fact remains that agrochemical use impacts heavily on biodiversity and is therefore clearly not compatible with the objective of EFAs.

Research presented in a workshop organized by PAN Europe together with MEP Maria Noichl and MEP Martin Häusling in the European Parliament in December 2016 [2] showed clearly that, when properly managed, EFAs deliver not just more biodiversity but also yield increases in adjacent fields of greater than 10% for wheat, 20% for beans and 30% for carrots. The key principle for proper management of EFAs is not pesticide use, but promoting the presence of certain types of common flowering plants.

The Commission proposal represents a huge win for farmers, a huge win for biodiversity and a huge win for common sense [4]. Using pesticides in arable areas designated as ‘ecological’ would distort the intention of the CAP reform to provide areas in productive commercial farming where biodiversity may provide the multiple ecosystem service on which agricultural productivity depends.

Yours sincerely,

François Veillerette
President of PAN Europe

On behalf of Pesticide Action Network Europe, Buglife, Compassion in World Farming, The European Environmental Bureau, Birdlife Europe & Central Asia and IFOAM EU.



[1] In 1998 agricultural ministers – in the Agricultural Council of Cardiff – set specific objectives for agrochemicals into the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) agreeing: “*In addition to EU rules to control maximum levels of pesticides in farm produce and measures to reduce the environmental risks of pesticide use (water contamination, deterioration of biodiversity, etc.), further measures should be developed for sensitive areas.*”

[2] Lunchtime debate on December 1, 2016 entitled, "Making biodiversity work for farmers: Bringing ecology back into Ecological Focus Areas": <http://www.pan-europe.info/what-we-do/conferences/lunchtime-debate-use-pesticides-ecological-focus-areas>

[3] Pierre J, Suzo MJ, Moreno MT, Esnault R, Le Guen J (1999)., *Diversité et efficacité de l'entomofaune pollinisatrice (Hymenoptera: Apidae) de la féverole (Vicia faba L.) sur deux sites, en France et en Espagne*, Ann. Soc. Ent. France (n.s.) 35 (suppl.): 312-318.

[4] An example of how area of wildlife habitat increases whole farm yield
<http://rspb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/282/1816/20151740.full>