



**Pesticide
Action
Network**
Europe

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Neonicotinoids: the European Court of Justice upholds the 2013 decision to impose restrictions on their use

Today, a General Court from the European Court of Justice of Luxembourg confirmed that the European Commission acted lawfully by banning the use of bee-killing neonicotinoids on bee-attractive crops in 2013. The verdict from the Court is an answer to the challenge that Bayer and Syngenta initiated in 2013 after the partial ban on their products. PAN Europe, together with other NGOs has intervened in the court case in support of the action of the European Commission.

Following scientific opinions from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the European Commission restricted the use of 3 neonicotinoid insecticides (Bayer's imidacloprid and clothianidin and Syngenta's thiamethoxam). These 4 substances were proven to be highly toxic to bees.

The two pesticide companies directly challenged the decisions before the European Court of Justice of Luxembourg. Many agro-industry lobbies supported the pesticide companies (European Crop Protection Association, Crop Life International, UK National Farmers Union, etc.) while civil society organisations intervened in support of the European Commission as a coalition (PAN Europe, European Beekeeping Coordination, Greenpeace, Client Earth, Buglife and Sum of Us).

Martin Dermine, PAN Europe's Health and Environment Policy Officer said: "In the frame of this case, we had to fight many misleading arguments from the agro-industry. We believe that our intervention in the case played an important role in order to show to the Court that the Commission was right to restrict neonicotinoids in 2013. This verdict from the European Court of Justice is very timely as it backs the recent EU decision to completely ban all outdoor uses of neonicotinoids".

The 2013 restrictions were decided based on a new EFSA Bee Guidance Document for the risk assessment of plant protection products on bees. This document is the most up to date way to assess the toxicity of pesticides on bees before a pesticide approval or in case of pesticide re-evaluation. However, , the Guidance Document has still not been endorsed by EU Member States as a result of intense lobbying from the agrochemical industry with support from some Member States who have effectively blocked its progress.

Martin Dermine added: "This verdict clearly shows that the use of the Bee Guidance Document is an essential tool to protect bees from the harmful effects of pesticides. It is long overdue for Member States to approve the Guidance Document when making any decisions about approvals of pesticides that potentially pose a threat to bee populations".

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Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Europe is a network of NGOs working to reduce the use of hazardous pesticides and have them replaced with ecologically sound alternatives. We work to eliminate dependency on chemical pesticides and to support safe sustainable pest control methods. Our network brings together 40 consumer, public health, and environmental organisations, and women's groups from across Europe.