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Pesticide Dependency Reductions must become one of the success indicators of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

The European Commission has published today its legislative proposals and its impact assessment on CAP reform. Within the hundreds of pages of documents, pesticide use reduction is not mentioned once!

The reform of the CAP is being sold as the idea of shifting policy from compliance to performance, shifting the CAP into a so-called “New Delivery Model”, with broad policy objectives and common performance indicators. The Communication published in November 2017 mentioned that future policy will encourage transition... but we wonder transition towards what?

Over four months in 2017, 1,3 million people signed the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) on Banning Glyphosate and Protecting People and the Environment from Toxic Pesticides. The third request of the ECI was ‘setting EU-wide mandatory reduction targets for pesticide use, with a view to achieving a pesticide-free future’. The Commission replied in December 2017: ‘*The Commission will strive to ensure that Member States comply with their obligations under the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUPD) and reduce dependency on pesticides.*’ Yet implementation of the SUPD has been shamefully weak and today’s legal proposal lacks teeth.

We are convinced that an ambitious piece of legislation like the SUPD needs big spending programmes like the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in order to be successfully implemented.

“We wonder why pesticide use reductions is not even mentioned once in the CAP legislative proposals? None of the approx. 100 proposed indicators refer to reducing dependency on the use of pesticides as per existing obligations from the SUPD¹ and all that is mentioned is a vague objective to “reduce risks and impacts of pesticide use”. It is important the Commission does not disregard the groundswell of public opinion around glyphosate re-approval and the neonicotinoids ban as well as the recently reported ‘insect Armageddon’ and massive bird decline²: Farmers need incentives and support to transition to largescale pesticide use reductions and a more sustainable agriculture.” said Henriette Christensen, PAN Europe’s Senior Policy Advisor.

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¹ Quantitative pesticide use reduction targets could for instance be included into the following proposed indicators mentioned in Objective 5 (*foster sustainable development and efficient management of resources*). Bees should be included under Objective 6 (*preserve nature and landscapes*); the indicator “enhanced biodiversity protection” and the pollinator indicator should become much more generic with subdivision into clearly measurable units. Crop rotation should become one of the keys to measuring compliance with Objective 4 (*contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation*).

² <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0185809>, <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/europe-bird-population-countryside-reduced-pesticides-france-wildlife-cnrs-a8267246.html>, <https://phys.org/news/2018-03-bird-populations-french-countryside-collapsing.html>

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.