



**Pesticide
Action
Network**
Europe

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How agrobusiness and Member States join forces to maintain bee-toxic pesticides on the market

In the 16-17 July meeting of the Standing Committee on phytopharmaceuticals, a majority of Member States have shown how little ambitious they are to protect bees against toxic pesticides. Several decisions took place, highlighting how the agro-business is present in the Standing Committee through the voice of too many Member States. Today, Member States have voted in favour of a plan proposed by the European Commission, to delay a major upgrade of the protection of bees against pesticides while Member State refused to support a Commission proposal to forbid the provision of derogations for neonicotinoids by Romania and Lithuania. While insect populations are collapsing and despite pro-bees declarations, EU Member States are forcing the European Commission to kneel down before the interests of the agro-industry.

Several decisive issues have been discussed during the July meeting of the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (phytopharmaceuticals). Firstly, a majority of Member States have voted in favour of the proposal by the European Commission to implement a very small section of the Bee Guidance Document (BGD) that the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published in 2013. The BGD was written by the EFSA to upgrade the evaluation of the risk posed by pesticides to bees as the former protocol was not efficient enough to prevent bee-toxic pesticides such as neonicotinoids to arrive on the market. Six years after its publication, very little progress has thus been made.

Martin Dermine, a policy officer at PAN Europe said: “During many years, this guidance document was either not at the agenda of Standing Committee meetings or was rejected by Member States as they feared too many pesticides would be removed from the market. This is a form of acknowledgement that pesticides currently on the market are too toxic to bees. Evidence shows that even fungicides and herbicides damage bees!”

The European Commission thus had no other choice but to make a minimalistic proposal to Member States, to adopt a very small portion of the new Guidance Document related to acute toxicity testing while the rest of the BGD will not be implemented before the EFSA is reviewing the BGD.

Martin Dermine to add: “*Pesticide industry lobbyists together with pro-industrial agriculture Member States did a terrible job. They thus put the Commission in an uncomfortable position as the most up to date scientific knowledge will not be used before at least 3 years, contrary to what the law demands. Bee toxic pesticides will stay on the market! Refusing to implement the Bee Guidance Document is simply illegal.*”

Confirming their hypocritical stance, Member States have refused today to support a Commission implementing decision to impede Romania and Lithuania to keep abusing the derogation system by giving year after year an emergency authorisation to neonicotinoids, thus circumventing the ban to protect bees.

Martin Dermine to conclude “*76% of Member States backed the 2018 EU ban on neonicotinoids but when it comes to respecting the ban or going further by assessing all pesticides the way neonicotinoids were assessed, Member States stand on the side of the agro-business, thus raising the indignation of citizens and giving more fuel to populist and extremist political parties. This is a sad day for EU pollinators!*”

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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.