

CHAIRMAN'S CONCLUSIONS

1. BACKGROUND

In the EU, legislation in the plant protection products (PPP) area has been developed for more than 30 years and the EU is committed to sustainable agriculture for over 20 years since its introduction as a lead concept in the CAP in 1998. Environmental legislation and policy protecting both water and biodiversity exist for over half a century. Yet, concerns persist that progress in achieving sustainable use of PPP is not sufficient and that benefits for human health and the environment are not accruing. The stubborn high level of overall annual use at about 350,000 tonnes (AI) is a cause for concern although it is acknowledged that individual pesticide use is in continuous flux as better replaces worse.

The Sustainable use of pesticides directive (EC/128/2009) addresses this link between health, environment and agriculture. Its first implementation phase by Member States has been mediocre at best with only limited progress in areas such as training and education, aerial spraying, pesticide use bans or minimisation in public areas and protection of aquatic areas. There is little to no use of IPM (integrated pest management). Both the belated European Commission 2017 report (due in 2014) on implementation and NGO studies highlight this serious lack of ambition.

2. The 2018 SYMPOSIUM

The 6th symposium –IPM in Arable Crops - held at the European Parliament on 31 January 2018, was again organised by PAN, IOBC-WRPS and IBMA and hosted by Pavel Poc MEP. Its focus was on the development of IPM in arable farming with a strong emphasis on soil, farmers' experiences and the political dimension of fully implementing the directive. The presentations are available at ----- . Among the large and representative attendance were several MEPs including the EP rapporteur, Jytte Guteland. Her report is due by early summer 2018 and will be particularly pertinent in driving future implementation at the time when the next round of CAP reform is launched.

3. PROGRESS on ARABLE

The arable sector accounts for approximately half of agricultural land use in the EU. It is frequently considered that it is a step too far for IPM which is often seen, particularly by the chemical pesticide industry, as being more suited to the greenhouse and horticultural sectors. The symposium sought to question this consideration.

On SOIL, the data now at European level (together with the FAO global assessment of the impact of PPP on soil functions and ecosystems) give the picture of a serious decline in soil organic matter in European arable farming which is largely based on monoculture and completely contrary to the basic approach in IPM.

Specific concern was expressed with respect to wind erosion which is increasing and the transport of pesticide molecules notably glyphosate. New and disturbing information was provided by INRA regarding the effects of pesticides on earthworm populations, on soil bacteria and fungi. The issue of resilience of these species was raised but also the fact

that in current arable farming there are, year on year, pesticide applications which weaken the ability of soil organisms and micro-organisms to perform their soil functions which are vital to structure, water retention, organic matter, compaction and overall longterm workability.

On IPM and ARABLE at farm level, FARMERS from France and Italy provided their experiences stressing forcibly that economic, human health, cost reduction and soil protection issues were at the heart of their moves from conventional to IPM. They saw rotations as central to IPM. They stressed the importance of education and advice, of the role of groups and the need for low impact alternative plant protection products. Their message could not have been clearer; We are delivering and can deliver IPM at farm level and want the help of policy makers, biological control and low risk pesticides to help us. In plain, blunt terms IPM is possible in large scale arable farming now and new products will ease that achievement. YES WE CAN!

The representatives of the BIOLOGICAL CONTROL producers reiterated the huge financial problems they face in the entire authorisation process. Costs of up to and more than 2 million euros for just one biological control agent which could be very specific to a single crop are preventing them from developing biological control and leaving the field open to chemical control and the major chemical producers. The stifling of SME innovation is a major constraint to IPM including and especially in arable.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The knowledge now built up on the SUPD not least through the determined work of the symposia to date and the difficulties still being encountered require a serious response at EU institutional and MS level.

It is abundantly clear that across all the sectors, as so clearly evidenced by the experiences of farmers in the arable, greenhouse, apple and grape and vine sectors outlined at these symposia, there is a determination, ability and interest to take IPM from its present largely aspirational position to being a real and meaningful system of farming beneficial to farmers, land, innovation and consumers.

Progress at the legislative and policy level, across the health, environment and agriculture levels, is patchy – sometimes encouraging, more times frustrating – with insufficient signs of a joined up approach. The publication of the SUPD Commission report is welcome, the intention of the Commission to follow it up vigorously with MS in their revised/new action plans a positive step and the interest shown by the EP most encouraging. But, little progress even on the basic parts of the SUPD requirements has been made in many MS.

The increasing knowledge at policy level in soil provides a new opportunity to put its protection into the heart of land use but experience to date shows that knowledge not supported by action will simply postpone a glaring problem to another generation.

The apparent lack of interest in linking SUPD implementation at farm level to Cross Compliance within the CAP remains a reality despite the formal linkage established in the 2014 reform. It represents a perfect CATCH 22 situation; MS don't implement or implement poorly and, therefore, the Commission cannot propose inclusion. As a result, EU legislation is brought into disrepute and disloyalty to the *acquis* rewarded rather than challenged.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

The following recommendations are made;

- The EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT should produce its report on the the Commission's implementation report stressing the need to address all health aspects. The health of bees, beetles, earthworms, soil fungi and bacteria are in focus currently (all of deepest concern) but the knock on effects on small animals and birds must also be addressed. And, of course, human health. Agriculture, even within IPM, will sometimes require chemical PPP; farming needs to be confident that these products are safe in all respects and consumers require certainty regarding safety. The EP should also deal with the barriers to biological control and low risk pesticides and look at ways in which to remove blockages to authorisation especially financially for SMEs and for niche products. Finally, the EP report should examine the reasons for the poor performance of so many MS on what could be regarded as the technical aspects of SUPD implementation as well as devoting a considerable effort to requiring a much greater effort from MS in their pursuit of IPM.
- At COMMISSION level, the intentions outlined in its report represent a major step forward which needs translation into positive action. Working with MS on updating their plans and actions will require human resources. While SANTE is responsible for the directive, ENV and AGRI have major roles to play and their support is required. A concerted effort to move IPM to mainstream requires the cooperation of all if the benefits for farmers, consumers, biodiversity, water and air are to be achieved. In the upcoming CAP reform, achieving IPM across as many sectors as possible should be a priority, backed up in legislation and imaginative financial support.
- Many MEMBER STATES have dragged their feet in SUPD implementation. They must redress this situation. They know the problem areas of PPP use, they know the potential for IPM and the support from farmers and consumers for it. They need to upgrade their national plans imaginatively and courageously so as to respond to the challenges of the directive and to address their long made commitments to biodiversity, clear air and water. In so doing, they need to take advantage of the possibilities in both pillars of the CAP.
- The PPP PRODUCERS need a much more imaginative approach to sustainable agriculture through real commitment to the principles of IPM which sees PPP use as a last rather than a first resort and which requires biological control and low risk pesticides to attain a much higher level of investment than currently. The work of the SMEs in biological control and low risk chemicals is lighting a pathway for a

radically new direction which needs encouragement rather than discounting. The push, particularly from producers, environmentalists and consumers is for safer products and this represents much more a business opportunity to be seized than a threat to be rejected.

- FARM ORGANISATIONS now need to step up their efforts to demand the tools for IPM in order to enhance sustainability. They, rather than many individual farmers, have not been as vocal in this area and this hesitation is costing and will cost them in terms of product image and sustainability.
- In order to reduce complacency and to the extent that they are in a position financially to do so, NGOs must redouble their efforts to pressurise for the complete implementation of the SUPD including IPM. NGOs have played an important role in pushing for progress on SUPD implementation to date often in the face of limited institutional interest. It is now necessary to highlight which crop sectors (and where) are making most and least progress and why!

Finally, efforts at all levels to promote SOIL PROTECTION must continue. This symposium, providing updated and new evidence of the decline of soil functions, has painted a deeply worrying picture of the state of soils (particularly arable) in the EU and far beyond. The approach to soil within IPM, while by no means the complete picture, goes some way towards improving protection but it is again time to revisit comprehensive soil protection from an EU policy perspective and so redress the missed opportunities of the past decade.

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