

Fourth neonicotinoid pesticide banned by EU

Robert Hodgson
13 Jan 2020

The use of the pesticide thiacloprid will be banned in the spring after the European Commission legislated on Monday to prevent the renewal of authorisation for its use in the EU, following the advice of the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA).

The move follows [endorsement of a draft regulation in October](#) by a committee of national government delegates. The current licence for marketing thiacloprid in Europe expires on 30 April.

“The scientific advice from EFSA is clear: there are environmental concerns related to the use of this pesticide, particularly its impact on groundwater, but also related to human health, in reproductive toxicity,” health commissioner Stella Kyriakides said.

The EU executive took the decision after EFSA published a risk assessment early last year. “Today’s adoption is yet another clear demonstration of the commission’s commitment to protect the health of EU citizens and our environment, with evidence of this priority being the farm to fork strategy within the European Green Deal,” Kyriakides said

But for the campaign group Pesticide Action Network Europe the timing of the prohibition, although welcome, was evidence of a lack of urgency in the commission.

“We regret it took so long to ban this toxic substance: in 2015 the European Chemicals Agency classified it as ‘toxic to reproduction category 1B’ which means it could have been banned the same year,” said policy officer Matrtin Dermine. “Thiacloprid is another example of the loose implementation of the law in favour of the agrochemical industry.”

“If we really want to protect human health and biodiversity as promised by the von der Leyen commission, we need a radical change in the mindset of the European Commission and the member states to finally implement effectively the precautionary principle,” Dermine said.

Thiacloprid is the fourth of five neonicotinoid pesticides that were approved for use in Europe to have been banned or severely restricted in the wake of growing evidence of the toxicity and devastating effects on honeybees and other pollinators.

Three were restricted in 2018 – they can still be used in greenhouses – while a fifth, acetamiprid, has been deemed low risk and its licence extended to 2033. Neonicotinoids are highly soluble systemic pesticides that permeate the roots and tissues of plants, meaning residues cannot be washed off fruit or vegetables.

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