

Conclusion by Martin Dermine, *PAN Europe*

Figures on the decline of biodiversity are alarming: not only insects but biodiversity in general is collapsing worldwide, as the recent IPBES report has demonstrated. Agriculture is one reason for this collapse. The feeling of urgency is nevertheless in contradiction with the European Commission and Member States' timeline. To give you an example, the first indications that neonicotinoids harm bees were observed in 1994 in France by beekeepers. This led to a ban on outdoor uses of neonicotinoids in 2018, 26 years later. In the meantime, the European Food Safety Authority was asked to create a new Bee Guidance Document to better assess the risk posed by pesticides. This document was published in 2013 but Member States kept opposing to it so the EFSA now has to revise it, it will take at least 2 years and at the best 1 year to see it adopted by the Member States, which leads us to 2021. The, only 10 years later will all the pesticides on the market be tested using the new Bee Guidance Document's methodology, which leads us to 2031, i.e. 37 years after the first proofs that pesticides are not assessed correctly on bees, one third of a century!

The Commission decided now to review the ecotoxicology guidance documents, it will take another 20 years until we see a positive effect on the environment. This system is far too slow to give the protection the environment deserves. It is time for serious EU action. In the recent EU Eurobarometer¹, 96% of citizens considered the loss of biodiversity as a major concern. This is a very strong signal for the European Commission and politicians to act!

Furthermore, over the last decades, the Common Agricultural Policy has been massively subsidizing farming systems that destroy the environment, pollute our waters and jeopardize the future of agriculture itself, by killing beneficial insects, eroding soils and destroying soil life.

In parallel, farmers suffer: they have a low income and a bad reputation while on the other hand, when we talk to farmers, many acknowledge they would like to change practices but they are stuck in a system that does not allow to.

In our view, the CAP money should be used to reconcile farmers, citizens and biodiversity. It should be ambitious and positive: agriculture should be a tool to redevelop biodiversity while maintaining sustainable levels of production. We observed today that many possibilities exist in terms of alternatives to pesticides but on the other hand, we see that pesticide sales are going up in many Member States. Therefore, the European Commission and Member States should make much more efforts to tackle the issue and effectively reduce pesticides consumption and promote alternatives as for the moment, we do not observe this².

¹<http://ec.europa.eu/comfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/special/surveyky/2194>

² Read PAN Europe position paper on the proposal for a New Delivery Model for the CAP after 2020 https://www.pan-europe.info/sites/pan-europe.info/files/PositionPaper_CAP_post2020_final_pdf.pdf and the new inspiration note on how member states should use the new strategic plans to seriously reduce dependency on pesticides <https://www.low-impact-farming.info/sites/default/files/2019-05/cap-inspiration-3.pdf>