



Pesticide
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Europe

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Neonicotinoids: EFSA gives a blank cheque to Member States to keep abusing the toxic derogations' system

Today, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published its assessment of derogations¹ provided by EU Member States for the use of neonicotinoid insecticides on sugar beet in 2020. The EFSA has green lit all 17 derogations. The agency has once more done a very poor job and has confirmed its limitations in terms of scientific expertise.

Martin Dermine, bee expert and policy officer at PAN Europe said: *“It is the second time the agency has carried out such a low-quality job and despite our requests and proposals to improve their work, it seems favouring bee-toxic pesticides is more important than scientific excellence!”*

In 2018, the EFSA had carried out a comparable work² related to the provision of derogations for the use of neonicotinoids, which also led to mostly favourable evaluations. For the second time, the agency had asked a series of questions to Member States but failed to carry out a proper investigation on the real need for a derogation at the local level and the existence of alternatives.

Martin Dermine further added: *“Evidence shows that Member States neither did their job nor checked the agronomic rationale behind the derogation requests from the industry: of a true danger to crops for which no efficient alternative exists. Member States abuse the derogation system to maintain toxic pesticides on the market for years and now, the EFSA gives a blank cheque to such practices!”*.

Following such abuses on derogations, PAN Europe went to Court in Belgium in 2019, 2020 and 2021 and 5 prejudicial questions were sent to the European Court of Justice by the Belgian administrative court in 2021³.

Martin Dermine concluded: *“We truly hope that the Court of Justice of the EU will fix the situation as both EFSA and the Commission have turned a blind eye on the environmental disaster linked to those abuses on the derogation system! Both chemical and non-chemical alternatives to neonicotinoids exist and the approach from EFSA prevents the systemic change we need in agriculture!”*

Contact: PAN Europe, Martin Dermine, +32 486 32 99 92, martin@pan-europe.info

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.



¹ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/news/neonicotinoids-efsa-assesses-emergency-uses-sugar-beet-202021>

² <https://www.pan-europe.info/press-releases/2018/06/efsa-shows-its-scientific-limits-providing-low-quality-assessment-national>

³ <https://www.pan-europe.info/blog/pan-europe-takes-issue-pesticide-derogations-court-justice-european-union>