



# **PAN Europe**

## **Pesticide Action Network Europe**

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London, 06 July 2006

**To:** Commissioner XXX

**Subject:** Call to introduce a general ban on aerial spraying in the European Union.

Dear Commissioner:

We write to you ahead of the adoption of the proposal for the new Directive for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides. One measure we find particularly important is the ban of aerial spraying to limit the risks of significant adverse impacts on human health and the environment, in particular from spray drift.

**We believe a general ban is the only viable solution to the problem of aerial spraying in Europe and we call for the Commission not to miss the opportunity to introduce a ban to this practise that every year affects thousands of bystanders. Examples show that more benign practices can be implemented and are cost neutral to farmers while leading to reduced costs for water purification and health benefits for citizens.**

The same position was adopted by the European Parliament in its Resolution<sup>1</sup> of March 2003 on the Commission Communication "Towards a Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides".

One of the main concerns associated with aerial spraying is **the impact on human health caused by spray drift**. Research from the US shows that pesticide drift causes acute poisonings each year and can contribute to chronic health problems. Between 1997 and 2000, drift was responsible for half of all reported agricultural poisonings in California and a quarter of all reported poisonings<sup>2</sup>.

In this line, the Paris Appeal on diseases caused by environmental pollution, signed by thousands of scientists, doctors, NGOs and citizens in Europe, calls for the adoption of programmes and measures for the elimination of emissions of dangerous substances into the environment. In this case, we believe the adoption of the precautionary principle requires the introduction of a ban to aerial spraying.

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<sup>1</sup> European Parliament Resolution A5-0061/2003, point 7

<sup>2</sup> *Secondhand pesticides. Airborne pesticide drift in California*. Kegley, Katten and Moses, Californians for Pesticide Reform, Pesticide Action Network North America, 2003.  
<http://www.panna.org/resources/envHealth.html>

In practice, a lot of **improper aerial spraying** occurs and technical improvements have so far not been able to solve the problems. Many incidents have been recorded in Europe concerning contamination of organic fields, bees and beehives, and spraying of camping sites and even a school in Spain<sup>3</sup>. This shows how difficult it is to prevent incidents affecting the variety of activities in the countryside under aerial spraying.

We believe **there will be no economic losses for farmers**. The shift from aerial spraying to land spraying would not only create jobs on the ground necessary to implement alternative methods such as Integrated Pest Management but also reduce the quantity of pesticides used. In fact, when aerial spraying is used on olive trees, examples from Spain show that between 40 and 50% of the insecticide does not reach the tree, but the soil. There, the insecticide affects the fauna (specially birds) and the biological activity of the soil decreases. Up to 20% of the insecticide in the air stays in suspension and is carried over long distances.

In Spain the Municipalities of Ronda (Malaga) and the Natural Park of Castril (Granada) have already successfully replaced aerial spraying of olive-trees by treatments from tractors without additional costs to farmers.

Aerial spraying has been affecting negatively the health of citizens in Europe for many years. It is time that substantial measures are approved in Europe to curb this serious health hazard. The new Directive for the sustainable use of pesticides is the right instrument to address this practise.

Yours sincerely:



Sofia Parente  
PAN Europe  
Coordinator



John Hontelez  
Secretary General, EEB

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<sup>3</sup> PAN Europe Comments on the October 2004 Extended Impact Assessment entitled: *“Assessing economic impacts of the specific measures to be part of the Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides”*, February 2005. <http://www.pan-europe.info/publications/150205.shtm>