

# **PAN Europe**

## **Pesticides Action Network Europe**

### **PAN Europe position on aerial spraying, June 2004**

On 31 March 2004, the European Commission held a stakeholder meeting, (attended by Catherine Wattiez and David Buffin of PAN Europe) on Aerial Spraying, in the context of its elaboration of the Thematic Strategy on pesticides.

Many pro-spraying companies present stressed the environmental benefits from low volume, GPS-guided, sophisticated technologies but no demonstrated evidence was presented, although some US studies were mentioned. Aerial application practice differs among EU MS, e.g. Greece no longer aerial sprays olives but Spain does, there is aerial spraying on forests in Germany but no longer in Austria. Total bans exist currently only in Denmark, Estonia, Slovenia, with partial bans in Italy, Cyprus, Austria and Belgium. French and Spanish helicopter companies which spray vineyards lobbied hard, arguing that all application is precisely controlled and there is no alternative on steep slopes. Some companies argued that aerial spraying could be part of IPM requirements because it "can follow much more precisely recommendations from extension services and pest forecasting".

BiPro consultants suggested 4 options:

1. legally-binding general ban, but MS can make derogations when no viable alternatives or when environmental benefits exist, but only where bystander and environmental exposure can be controlled.
2. No EU ban but recommendation for MS to restrict or ban when safeguarding bystanders or environment cannot be met .
3. Taxes, levies etc to increase costs of aerial application but no restrictions
4. No action

PAN Europe was asked to reconsider its position on aerial spraying, for a total ban with no derogations, the position described in our suggested text for a Directive on Pesticide Use Reduction in Europe (PURE), published in 2002. Such an option is not currently being considered by DG Environment, was not proposed among possible options by the BiPro consultant and was rejected by all other stakeholders at the meeting. At the meeting we expressed major concerns that no concrete evidence was provided for the claimed environmental benefits from aerial application and that drift exposure poses considerable hazards to bystanders and particularly those living and working near regularly sprayed zones.

At a subsequent PAN Europe working group meeting (8 May 2004), PAN Europe agreed:

1. to continue to argue for a total ban, but within 5 years, to allow time to improve ground application practices and to develop and use new alternative pest control systems.
2. PAN Europe would use the aerial spraying issue as a strategy to push for public right to know on pesticide applications (buffer zones, re-entry periods, public posting of advance warning, public use reporting), a phase out plan and stricter monitoring/enforcement.
3. PAN Europe believes it is important to reject the IPM linkage will aerial spraying and essential to gather more data on drift exposure. New research from the US shows that pesticide drift causes acute poisonings each year and can contribute to chronic ill health. Between 1997 and 2000, drift was responsible for half of all reported agricultural poisonings in California and a quarter of all reported poisonings<sup>1</sup>.
4. If PAN Europe's position of a total ban is rejected by the Commission, we would want to make sure that a detailed and harmonized comparative assessment is carried out whereby the health (including of bystanders, residents of agricultural and forestry sprayed areas,

infants and children) and environmental effects would have to be assessed against other chemical ground applications and non-chemical options, and proved - beyond all reasonable doubt - to be safer. If the BiPro option 1 is agreed (general ban but Member States can authorise derogations), there must be a similar assessment in each specific case for potential derogation as part of the decision-making process.

1. 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>