



Pesticide  
Action  
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Europe

# PRESS RELEASE

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## PAN Europe challenges the European Commission in Court to stop the new bee-killing pesticide Sulfoxaflor

In 2014, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published a negative opinion on Dow agrosience's new Sulfoxaflor insecticide. The pesticide was qualified as 'highly toxic to bees' by the Authority and it identified crucial toxicity data gaps, which makes a proper risk assessment for bees impossible. The chemical is similar to the "neonicotinoids", the pesticides upon which EU has put a "moratorium" due to their toxicity to bees. Despite these facts, DG Sante and the EU member states authorised Sulfoxaflor on 27 July 2015, completely bypassing the pesticide regulation. PAN Europe requests the European Court of Justice to cancel this unjustified approval.

PAN Europe, together with Bee Life - European Beekeeping Coordination and the Italian national beekeeping union (UNAAPI) have recently filed a complaint to the European Court of Justice, asking the court to cancel the Sulfoxaflor authorisation.

Sulfoxaflor is a 4<sup>th</sup> generation neonicotinoid insecticide<sup>1</sup>. Like others, it is highly toxic to bees, is absorbed by plants and is present in nectar and pollen. It also leads to long-term contamination of soils and water. Its physico-chemical and toxicological specificities make it a neonicotinoid but Dow managed to have it classified as a Sulfoximine insecticide, probably for reputation reasons.

The few field studies provided by Dow indicate acute risk to bees but important information is missing on brood (progeny) toxicity, sublethal (orientation) toxicity or long term toxicity. Further, no studies on wild pollinators such as bumble bees were made. This information is nonetheless mandatory, according to EU law<sup>2</sup> but DG SANTE has overlooked the evidence showing sulfoxaflor is toxic to bees and the lack of toxicity data, and authorised this insecticide for 10 years.

In contrast, back in 2013, a similar analysis of 3 neonicotinoid insecticides from EFSA (high risk to bees, many data gaps to carry out a proper risk assessment) led to an EU-wide ban on bee-attractive crops. Why DG SANTE now decided to do the opposite is irrational and illegal.

On September 10<sup>th</sup> 2015, a US federal court suspended the authorisation of sulfoxaflor<sup>3</sup>. Unlike DG SANTE, the judge estimated that the American Environment Protection Agency illegally authorised sulfoxaflor, despite the lack of reliable studies to assess the toxicity on honey bee colonies.

Martin Dermine, PAN Europe's honey bee project coordinator explains: "In 2013, DG Sante made a positive step towards a better protection of bees and the environment in general. This U-turn is not acceptable. We put it in parallel with other negative developments in the pesticide area since the Juncker Commission was established".

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<sup>1</sup> Investigating the mode of action of sulfoxaflor: a fourth-generation neonicotinoid. Cutler P, Slater R, Edmunds AJ, Maienfisch P, Hall RG, Earley FG, Pitterna T, Pal S, Paul VL, Goodchild J, Blacker M, Hagmann L, Crossthwaite AJ. *Pest Manag Sci.* 2013 May;69(5):607-19. doi: 10.1002/ps.3413. Epub 2012 Oct 30.

<sup>2</sup> Regulation 283/2013

<sup>3</sup> <http://earthjustice.org/news/press/2015/federal-court-overturns-epa-approval-of-bee-killing-pesticide#>