



**Pesticide
Action
Network**
Europe

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Brussels 29 June 2021

European Countries “improve” bees’ protection against pesticides by allowing important mortalities in the hives

During the AGRIFISH council meeting on 28 June, a vast majority of Member States have backed the proposal from the European Commission to set the acceptable level of pesticide harm to honey bee colonies at 10% mortality. While politicians claim the 10% agreement is a political success¹, PAN Europe believes this agreement will continue to damage European pollinators and insects in general. This is in opposition with the Biodiversity Strategy from the European Green Deal.

Following the scandal around the intoxication of thousands of beehives across the EU with neonicotinoid insecticides, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) had proposed in 2013 a new methodology² to improve the risk assessment on the toxicity of pesticides on bees. At the time, experts from Member States agreed on a maximum 7% reduction in honey bee colony size due to pesticides. The so-called Bee Guidance Document was never approved by EU agricultural ministers because they feared the approach would remove too many pesticides from the market. AGRIFISH Council decision therefore puts an end to the 8-year saga where Member States kept refusing to move forward with improving the risk assessment on the toxicity of pesticides on bees. The previous risk assessment was nearly 20 years old and was partly co-written by the pesticides industry itself.

Martin Dermine, health and environmental policy officer at PAN Europe said: “*We are highly concerned because allowing for 10% reduction in honey bee colony size means we accept an important impact of the use of pesticides on insects. This will maintain on the market pesticides that are a main driver of the decline of pollinators in Europe*”.

In 2013, following a scientific approach, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) had reached to the conclusion that after one exposure to a single pesticide, a honey bee colony could survive to a 7% reduction in colony size².

Martin Dermine to add: “*The approach is biased: Member States and the European Commission base their decision on a single exposure scenario while in real life, our pollinators are exposed to cocktails of pesticides and other toxic chemicals on a daily basis. Evidence also shows that pesticides increase bees’ susceptibility to pathogens. This is not considered at all*”.

PAN Europe had asked for a maximum of 5% “acceptable reduction” to take into account the lack of protection linked to the numerous shortcomings of risk assessment.

¹https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_21_3302

²<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3295>

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.



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Martin Dermine to conclude: “*The European Commission and Member States are here creating a situation of unequal treatment: while a beekeeper will be obliged to accept that another farmer kills up to 10% of his bees by using pesticides, what would a pig producer say if his piglets lost 10% of their weight from one day to another every week?*”.

The European Commission has committed to start restoring biodiversity in Europe by 2030 in the frame of the Biodiversity Strategy of the Green Deal. PAN Europe, jointly with ca. 200 organisations in Europe is advocating for a bee-friendly and pesticide-free agriculture in the frame of the *Save Bees and Farmers*³ European Citizens initiative that has collected over 600 000 signatures throughout the EU.

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³www.savebeesandfarmers.eu

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