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10 days for a pesticide-free spring!

Pesticide Action Week kicks off



The Pesticide Action Week is an annual international event open to all and aiming to promote alternatives to pesticides. It takes place from 20th to 30th March, the 10 first days of spring during which the spreading of pesticides resumes. The public is invited to get better informed about the health and environmental issues caused by pesticides and the possible alternatives through hundreds of gatherings, with conferences, panel discussions, film shows, workshops, site visits, symbolic marches, open farms, stands, exhibitions, shows and more. This year, 700 events are already scheduled mostly in France and in 15 other countries in Europe and Africa. The Greens/EFA group are contributing to this initiative, in particular via its Give Bees a Chance campaign, aiming to end the negative impacts of pesticides and GMOs on bees and related food products. On 19th March, 1 day before the start of the Pesticide Action Week, Green/EFA MEPs kicked-off spring with the movie screening in the European Parliament of 'More than Honey', the new film of Markus Imhoof in order to spread the word and call for action to stop the practices affecting bee colonies, especially the use of neonicotinoid pesticides which are currently under discussion at the European level. See here what's wrong with bees and pesticides and what needs to be done to save them:

- Total ban on the use of neonicotinoid insecticides needed: Open letter to Commissioner Borg on Bees and neonicotinoids
- Syngenta, Lies & Pesticides: The 10 Syngenta Lies on bees and neonicotinoids

This Friday 22nd March, to share experience on alternatives to neonicotinoid pesticides with academics,

farmers, beekeepers, policy makers, NGOs and citizens, the Greens/EFA Group welcomes a conference on Pollinator Friendly farming *co-organised by Green MEP* **Bart Staes together with** *the* European Beekeeping Coordination**,** PAN Europe*, and other partner NGOs involved in anti-pesticide activities.* Scientists and field technicians are going to present their research on alternative agricultural practices to neonicotinoid pesticide affecting bees. Farmers will share their experiences on how to manage the implementation of such practices and the challenges they face. Beekeepers will give an insight of their concerns when interacting with agriculture. Coincidently or not, right on the starting day of the Pesticides Action Week, the European Parliament welcomed a joint hearing highlighting the necessary alternative to pesticide use. The hearing focused on how to improve health and safety at work for farmers. Paul François, President of the Phytovictims association was invited to testify on his experience as a farmer victim of pesticide use. Paul François won his trial against Monsanto after he accused the agro-chemical company of being responsible for the negative health impats he experienced after exposure to Lasso, a strong herbicide commercialised by the company. Since this episode, Paul François' central nervous system has been affected and he was forced to interrupt his farming activity for one year**.** While he is not himself an organic farmer, Paul François explained in his speech that chemicals are not indispensable for agriculture. He added that when critics say that European agriculture will be put into question if chemical products are not used anymore it is a lie**. 2013 is a key year for agriculture and the pesticides questions, with:**

- Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy
- Decision on the use of neonicotinoids pesticides affecting bees
- Definition by the European Commission of which endocrine disruptors to ban (which concerns many pesticides)

The issue of pesticides and their alternatives remains a central health, agricultural and environmental topic which keeps mobilising people across the world. All of us are exposed directly or indirectly to pesticides and further agrochemicals simply via the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe and the products we use for gardening and in the household. Pesticides have serious impacts on our environment and our health. Vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and children are especially at risk. **Check out here how to take action in the Pesticide action week to say yes to pesticide free food products:** http://www.pesticideactionweek.org **A few key events across the world :**

- **Belgium**:120 events to promote alternatives to pesticides for agricultural uses: www.semainesanspesticides.be
- **Spain**: a new video on the event (in Spanish) : http://www.vivosano.org/es_ES/Proyectos/Semanasinpesticidas.aspx
- **Africa** : workshops on pesticide free agriculture with farmers in several African countries
- **France**: 23rd March – French National Action Day : everybody is invited to post signs on pesticides free zones (fields, gardens, houses, public areas, schools…).
- **Brussels** : 22nd March in Brussels: Conference “Pollinator friendly farming is possible” at the European Parliament

Full program Map with all the planned events

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