en

News | 11.07.2013

Protecting Bees

New steps at EU level to protect bees and other pollinators



On Monday 15 July the European Commission will try to take the next step in protecting bees and other pollinators by proposing a temporary ban on the highly toxic pesticide Fipronil, from the phenylpyrazole chemical family. On Friday 24 May the European Commission (EC) announced that it would implement EU-wide restrictions on pesticide use by restricting the use of three neonicotinoid pesticides (clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiametoxam). This decision was taken because these substances were identified by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) as being harmful to Europe's honeybee population. The ban, which enters into force on 1 December 2013.and targets pesticides used in the treatment of plants and cereals that are attractive to bees and pollinators, will unfortunately only last for two years. We now hope that the EC will use a fast track procedure to apply this ban starting date for Fipronil as well. The issue will be discussed on 15 July in the Standing Committee, by Member States (MS) representatives and EU authorities (DG SANCO). Here, the EC is expected to make a proposal that is completely in line with the one on neonicotinoids. The diverging positions of the MS should be more or less the same as for the neonicotinoids and the EC is expected to implement the decision by September or early October. EFSA has published a strong warning on the damaging effects of Fipronil. According to a study (Bonmatin, 2009) on the toxicity of insecticides to honeybees compared to DDT, Fipronil - sold under the name Regent - is at least 6000 times as toxic compared to DDT, and more toxic than the soon-to-be banned thiametoxam. In view of this information, the European Beekeeping Coordination recommends EU policy makers vote for a total suspension of Fipronil and so a total application of the precautionary principle until a comprehensive risk assessment is completed and they ensure that Fipronil's ban starts at the same time as that of the three neonicotinoids. To achieve this, the European Beekeeping Coordination advises that Member States should achieve an agreement on the ban in the first round of the vote. In the

meantime EFSA has also published a new guidance document on a new approach to assess the risk of pesticides on bees. This new approach is based on “tiers” of tests and takes into account the potential risk from repeated exposure to pesticides. From a first simple and cost-effective tier to more complex higher tier studies, this aims to ensure that the appropriate level of protection is achieved to prevent bees from being intoxicated because of exposure to pesticides. By publishing these new assessment guidelines for pesticides, the EC and EFSA are indirectly admitting that the previous risk assessment method for these toxic products was insufficient. This is also being confirmed in an increasing number of independent scientific studies. The Greens/EFA group has always argued that the dramatic loss of bee colonies is linked to the devastating triple P: (lack of) Pollen, Pathogens and Pesticides (which ironically is also the acronym for Plant Protection Products, or pesticides). Lack of pollen is largely linked to a certain type of (monoculture) agriculture, which is in turn linked to the very same agro-chemical companies, as they sell both seeds and pesticides. In the framework of its Food Campaign the Greens/EFA group will be organising a public conference on 6 November 2013. This event aims to raise awareness of the link between the existing dangers to pollinators and the current agricultural model. It will also be the opportunity to convey tangible proposals for improvements and how they can be translated into EU agricultural policy. Check out our website for more information about this event. The Greens/EFA group fights for a shift to more sustainable forms of agriculture which would be better for ecosystems and biodiversity and crucial for the production of good quality and healthy food. In the short term, banning pesticides is the most effective measure to take to reach this goal.

Recommended

Press release

karsten-wurth-unsplash



[Court upholds EU climate rules - EU must now show lead…]

12.11.2026

Opinion

© Christian Kaufmann

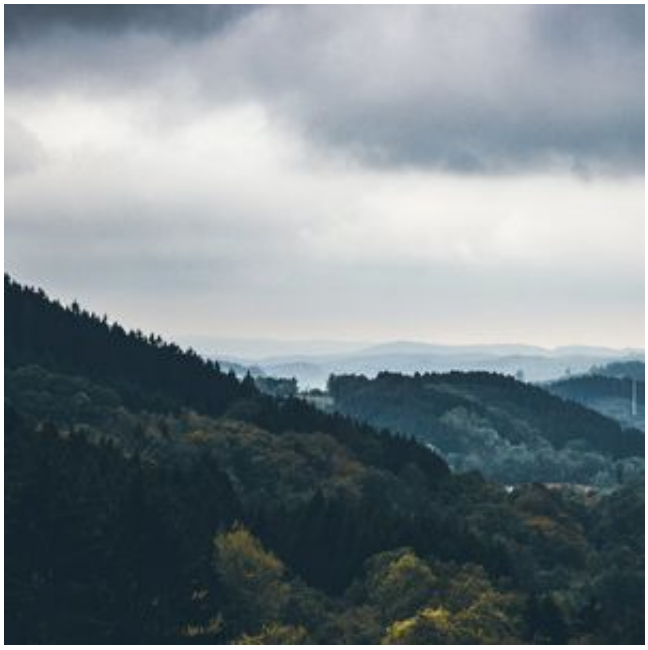


[Healthy food starts with healthy farming. Europe must …]

04.11.2026

Press release

sebastian-johann



Commission launching an attack against nature

04.11.2026

Press release

Image by joakant from Pixabay



[The World must triple efforts to save nature]

29.10.2026

Contact person



Nelly Baltide

Advisor on Development

Please share

- E-Mail