News | 12.03.2013

Syngenta, Lies & Pesticides

The 10 Syngenta Lies on bees and neonicotinoids

Agro-chemical multinational **Syngenta**, earning billions of euro a year selling "plant protection products" and seed coating products, notably with **neonicotionoids**, one of the most used types of pesticides, recently launched a multi-million euro lobbying campaign across Europe, to stop European authorities from taking action to lower the use of these chemicals. At the end of January the European Commission (EC) announced a two-year ban on three neonicotionoids because of their influence on the **mortality of bees**. Since the introduction of these systemic insecticides, two decades ago, deaths and disappearances amongst bee colonies in the US and Europe have reached such epidemic proportions that the term '**Colony Collapse Disorder**' (CCD) came into use [1]. Some beekeepers in the US will even apply for disaster relief from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) [2]. On 16th January 2013, the **European Food Safety Authority** (EFSA) published three reports on the toxicity risk to bees and other pollinator species of three neonicotinoid insecticides: clothianidin [3] and imidacloprid [4] by Bayer and thiamethoxam [5] by Syngenta. EFSA's conclusions are quite clear: these neonicotinoids pose a high risk to bees, either by the presence of these insecticides in nectar and pollen, by the dust produced when sowing coated seeds or by toxic exudates produced by treated plants. EFSA recommended that the three "highly toxic" actives in question be subjected to a much more rigorous regulatory assessment. Although banning the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on only honeybee-attractive crops would be a good step forward, this would certainly not solve the problem of the loss of pollinators. No one is denying that other factors like diseases (bacterial, viral, parasitic, etc) and intensive monoculture agriculture, also play a huge role in CCD. But Syngenta, who sell one of these products (thiametoxam, sold under the name Cruiser), **simply denies** that their products have anything to do with bee mortality. Syngenta and others have also put strong legal

pressure on the EC not to proceed with these policy measures. Nevertheless, the EC has recently proposed to **suspend the use of these three substances** on crops attractive to bees, namely sunflowers, oil seed rape, maize and cotton, across the EU, as a precautionary measure starting no later than 31st July 2013, for a period of two years. There is more than enough scientific evidence that neonicotinoids are indeed one of the factors in the decline of bee colonies and biodiversity in general. Syngenta is simply denying this. Although policy makers can't combat for example climate change or other contributing factors in the short term, what they can do is halt the widespread use of these specific pesticides: this is currently the most practical and effective policy measure that politicians can take. In fact the EC's proposal is **a bare minimum**: after a two-year ban of the three specific pesticides, bee populations will not have recovered sufficiently. This is because of the persistence of the chemicals in the agro-ecosystems and the continued medium-term exposure of non-target insects such as bees to the chemicals: this is why only a full ban makes sense eco-toxicologically. Anything less than a full ban, could lead to pesticide manufacturers again claiming that the use of neonicotinoids is not at all related to bee mortality. With a special website [6] and full page adverts in major European newspapers, Syngenta claims that this ban on three neonicotinoids, is based on flawed science and emotional humbug. What Syngenta is trying to do is deliberately spread uncertainty amongst policy makers and politicians. By spreading uncertainty via apparently "science based" arguments, the agro-chemical companies are acting as "merchants of doubt" [7] and thus blocking effective action by the EU. According to Syngenta (and the 'big six' of agrochemical companies) - the proposed ban on three neonicotinoids would lead to massive losses in agribusiness, and will not help bees to survive. This is why we want to dismantle the most important of their so-called "scientific claims" that are in fact based on lies, to protect corporate profits.

- Read about the 10 Syngenta Lies (pdf)

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