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Press release | 12.03.2013

Bee decline/insecticide ban

Proposed suspension of neonicotinoids must be upheld by EU governments

Crucial proposals from the European Commission to suspend the use of neonicotinoid insecticides - due to their damaging impact on bee populations - are set to be decided on by EU member states on Thursday. The decision will be taken by the Standing Committee on Food Chain and Animal Health (SCoFCAH) on phytopharmceuticals, but there are serious concerns that the proposed suspensions lack sufficient support among EU governments. Against this background, the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament has joined together with a number of NGOs to pressure EU governments to support the proposed bans (1). Commenting on the initiative, Green environment and food safety spokesperson **Bart Staes** (MEP, Belgium) said:

"Despite an overwhelming and growing body of evidence on the disastrous impact of these pesticides on pollinators, there are real concerns that EU governments could reject the Commission's proposal, following intense lobbying from industry. Instead of defending the short-term interests of the pesticide industry, EU governments and politicians should be prioritising a solution to the decline of bee populations.

"The Commission's proposal to suspend the use of 3 neonicotinoids came on the back of reports from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) on the toxicity risk to bees of the neonicotinoid insecticides. Suspending the use of these insecticides was the only responsible course of action in response to the report, which highlighted the failures of the European and national risk assessment and monitoring systems, which enabled neonicotinoids to harm bees for a long period. This is a minimum first step and we call on EU governments not to delay this essential measure to simply placate disingenuous agro-chemical firms (2).

"In reality, the suspension proposed by the Commission is only a first step. A complete ban of all neonicotinoids is clearly essential to prevent the collapse of our bee colonies, as only a full ban will stop the exposure of non-target insects to these persistent, systemic compounds that stay in the soil and find their way to nectar and pollen over many years. A cross-party group of MEPs has written to health commissioner Borg to this end (3)."

(1) Green MEPs and parties have written to their national governments to this end. The letter can be viewed at: http://www.greens-efa.eu/suspension-of-the-use-of-three-neonicotinoid-pesticides-9377.html

(2) See this Green briefing dismantling some of the claims made by the industry in their arguments against the suspension: http://www.greens-efa.eu/syngenta-lies-pesticides-9372.html

(3) A cross-party group of 90 MEPs wrote to Commissioner Borg on a Green initiative, calling for a total ban on neonicotinoids: http: www.greens-efa.eu/total-ban-on-the-use-of-neonicotinoid-insecticides-needed-9097.htm1

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Bart Staes

Member

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