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Member States fail to protect public health and environment from endocrine disrupters

Toxic substances

The Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed has today voted to approve new criteria determining hormone-disrupting chemicals used in pesticides. The European Commission's criteria will make it very difficult to identify endocrine disrupters, meaning that few if any products would be removed from the market.

Green environment and health spokesperson **Bas Eickhout** comments:

"The large majority of Member States have failed to live up to their responsibility to protect public health and the environment. It is shameful that after more than seven years of waiting we still don't have proper or useable criteria to determine what is an endocrine disrupter. Like the European Commission, most Member States have put the interests of a handful of big agro-chemical companies ahead of the safety of the public, with negative effects that go well beyond pesticides.

"Instead of using established definitions and regulatory frameworks, the Commission has set out to reinvent the wheel, leaving key issues to be sorted out via future guidance and creating further uncertainties and controversies. It is most frustrating to see that Member States support the Commission in exceeding its mandate by trying to avoid bans laid down in the law by fiddling with the criteria.

"Without proper, scientific and useable criteria, it will be next to impossible to take steps to reduce harm caused by endocrine disrupters. We will now work hard to build the majority needed in the European Parliament to veto these criteria and instruct the Commission to finally deliver what was demanded of it years ago."

Background

The WHO/UNEP consider that endocrine disrupters (EDCs) are a global threat, as they have the capacity to interfere with tissue and organ development and function, and therefore they may alter susceptibility to different types of diseases throughout life. EDCs have been linked to various severe human health problems, including cancer, fertility problems, genital malformations, obesity and neurobehavioural disorders. EDCs are present in a large range of commonly-used products such as pesticides and biocides,

food, food contact materials, toys, PVC flooring and cosmetics.

Back in 2009, during a major revision of pesticides legislation, the co-legislators, upon insistence of the European Parliament, mandated the Commission to adopt scientific criteria for the determination of endocrine-disrupting properties by end of 2013. The draft proposals were not produced until June 2016, and it has taken several rounds of modifications over more than a year for the Commission to finally obtain the support by a qualified majority of Member States.

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