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Toxic substances

Shameful Commission compounds wrongs on endocrine disruptors

The European Commission today presented long-delayed proposals, setting out scientific criteria to address the problem of chemical substances that interfere with the endocrine system (1). The Greens hit out at the proposals, with Green environment and health spokesperson **Bas Eickhout** stating:

"It is shameful that the European Commission is continuing to go out of its way to defend the line of the agro-chemical industry, instead of prioritising public health. Not only has the Commission proposed a very restrictive definition of what constitutes an endocrine disruptor (2), it has also proposed wider exemptions for them. In doing so, it both breaks with established practices of classification of similar chemicals and goes beyond it legal mandate. Instead of learning the lessons of the European court ruling against it, the Commission has compounded the damage of delaying action on chemical substances that interfere with the endocrine system by proposing inappropriate measures for dealing with them.

"Defining clear and comprehensive criteria on what constitutes an endocrine disruptor is a crucial step for properly regulating these chemicals and, ultimately, reducing exposure to them. The only guiding priority under EU law should be to address the major public health problems caused by these chemicals. However, the Commission is continuing to put the bottom line of a few agro-chemical companies ahead of public health. We will now have to build the necessary majorities in the Parliament to veto this shameful proposal (3)."

(1) Under EU law, the Commission was obliged to adopt criteria on endocrine disruptors by the end of 2013 but, despite being ready in time, these criteria were blocked due to lobbying and political interference. Last December the General Court of the European Union ruled that the Commission breached EU law by failing to act and that it is beyond the mandate of the Commission to alter the basic text of the law. More information: http://www.greens-efa.eu/public-health-endocrine-disrupters-15113.html

(2) The Commission wants to require proof that animal evidence is actually relevant for humans. This inverts standard practice of classification for comparable substances: for substances that are toxic to reproduction, animal evidence is presumed relevant for humans, unless there is mechanistic information to the contrary. Now this relevance has to be proven, otherwise animal tests are not considered.

(3) The European Parliament has the power to reject this under the comitology decision-making process.

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