

EU Environment Committee Vote on Pesticides

Brussels, 26 June 2007

The Environment Committee of the European Parliament today voted to strengthen the proposed Thematic Strategy and Framework Directive on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides. Members of the European Parliament have successfully brought in some positive measures to reduce total exposure to and risks from pesticides. If carried by the Parliament in the up-coming plenary vote, they will contribute to curbing the increasing over-use of pesticides in Europe and will guarantee greater protection for health and the environment.

Main points of the package adopted:

- The term pesticides stays and will not be substituted by Plant Protection Products
 - Pesticides are a more appropriate term to use in the Thematic Strategy as they cover also biocides, which PPPs do not. According to the Commission, biocides will be introduced at a later stage. In addition, pesticides are a commonly used term to which the wider public can relate, whereas plant protection products could mislead consumers as they do not give any indication of the hazardous properties of these products.
- The precautionary principle and the polluter-pays principle are introduced
- Focus on pesticide use reduction and not only risk reduction
- Quantitative reduction targets on the basis of the Treatment Frequency Index (TFI), and timetables in National Action Plans, (NAPs).
 - The TFI indicates the average number of times an agricultural area can be treated with the prescribed dose, based on the quantities sold. This type of indicator is already being used successfully in Denmark, Germany and Sweden. In Denmark the TFI has already led to a reduction of pesticide use by 50% in tonnage without economic loss for farmers. The Environment Committee however did not adopt a proposed EU-wide use reduction target of 50%.
- Promotion of non-chemical methods and promotion of organic agriculture. No targets to increase land under organic agriculture were passed.
- Fiscal measures (levy or tax) to implement general and crop-specific standards. Crop-specific standards are kept voluntary.
- On buffer-zones:
 - banning of pesticide use in sensitive areas and in substantial buffer-zones around these areas to protect vulnerable groups.
 - minimum (10 metres) buffer-zones to protect the aquatic environment
 - enhanced use of buffer zones to ensure protection of water bodies intended for drinking water abstraction.
- Ban of aerial spraying with derogations was kept but was made slightly stronger than in the Commission's proposal
 - aerial spraying of hazardous substances for aquatic organisms are banned
 - aerial spraying will be banned in close proximity of residential areas
 - aircraft to be equipped with best available technology to reduce spray drifts.
 - Prior notification of aerial spraying to competent authority.
- Encouraged public participation in the development of NAPs and of Integrated Pest Management, (IPM), standards
- Increased public access to information on long term effects of pesticides.

The improved proposals received overwhelming cross-party support in the Committee. The proposed Directive will be voted on by the entire Parliament at a plenary session together with a parallel Regulation concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market.

The plenary votes will most likely take place in late September-October.