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Bee decline/neonicotinoid ban

EU Commission bans pesticides harmful to bees - a first important step in the fight against bee decline

The European Commission today decided to suspend the use of three neonicotinoid insecticides - due to their damaging impact on bee populations (1). Reacting to the Commission's decision, Green environment and food safety spokesperson **Bart Staes** (MEP, Belgium) said:

"Today's decision is a first important step in efforts to address the decline of bee populations. The proposed neonicotinoid suspension is the only logical course of action in the face of the overwhelming and growing body of evidence on the disastrous impact of these insecticides on pollinators and ecosystems. After EU governments were unable to decide in April, the EU Commission today took a responsible decision following the precautionary principle.

"The Commission's ban on the use of three neonicotinoids is based on scientific reports from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) on the extremely high toxicity risk to bees of the neonicotinoid insecticides. Suspending the use of these insecticides is the only responsible course of action in response to these reports that also highlight the failures of European and national risk assessment and monitoring systems, which enabled neonicotinoids to harm bees for a long period.

"However, the duration of the ban is limited to two years and is only a first step. A complete ban of all neonicotinoids is clearly essential to prevent the collapse of our bee colonies and other insects, 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 (2).

"The issue has wider implications for EU rules on the authorisation of pesticides, which are currently under review. For too long, the effects of these pesticides on 'non-target species' have been ignored, with indiscriminate pesticide use having a devastating effect on biological diversity and ecosystems. The wider impact of these toxic substances must be taken into account in the authorisation process."

(1) The ban will enter into force as from 1 December 2013 and will be reviewed, at the latest, within two years. It targets pesticides used in the treatment of plants and cereals that are attractive to bees and pollinators.

(2) 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.html>

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Bart Staes

Member

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