



PRESS RELEASE

MEPs fold on mandatory pesticide use reduction

(Brussels, 24 October, 2007) - Yesterday's vote in the European Parliament on key legislation to determine which pesticides are sold in the EU and how they are used, shows that MEPs are struggling with heavy pressure from industry, believe health and environmental groups. The European Environmental Bureau, Pesticide Action Network Europe, the International Chemicals Secretariat, and the Health & Environment Alliance (HEAL) expressed disappointment at seeing key gains on the Directive on pesticide use cast aside while the Regulation on pesticide approval has remained largely intact.

MEPs opposed proposals for a 20 percent reduction in pesticide use over ten years. "A large section of the European Parliament is totally out of touch with European citizens, whose number one food-related concern is high pesticide residues in fruit and vegetables," said Elliott Carnell from PAN Europe. "MEPs have failed to deliver concrete targets to reduce pesticide use, and have given no guarantee that food contamination levels will drop. We also lack mandatory deadlines for applying integrated pest management."

But NGOs were relieved that Parliament agreed to ban the sale of pesticides that may cause cancer, damage our reproductive, immune and neural systems, or affect child development. MEPs also voted to prohibit or severely restrict pesticide spraying in and around public spaces like residential areas, playgrounds and healthcare facilities. "We welcome the vote because it shows MEPs have taken account of scientific evidence on the hazardous effects of pesticides", said Monica Guarinoni, Pesticides Policy Officer at HEAL. "If, as we hope, it results in legislation, vulnerable people across Europe, including children, will eventually enjoy better protection from pesticide exposure in parks and other spaces."

The vote introduces measures to tackle pesticide impacts on water quality. "MEPs have safeguarded a critical link with the Water Framework Directive, where water pollution triggers the review and possible withdrawal of pesticide authorisations," said Catherine Ganzleben, EEB's Chemicals Policy Officer. "Member States are also obliged to set up buffer zones around water courses, and pesticides-free zones to protect drinking water."

The NGOs believe the outcome will send a strong signal to pesticides producers and users that they must start prioritising pesticides which are less toxic and degrade more easily. "Different pesticides will be compared to assess which can do the job with the lowest environmental risk. Harmful pesticides for which there are safer alternatives will not be authorised," said Nardono Nimpuno of the International Chemical Secretariat. NGOs have urged national agriculture ministers to stand by Parliament's pledge and uphold what they see as critical measures in the Common Position for protecting human health and the environment.

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