

CE-marked fertilising products

In March 2016, the European Commission presented a proposal on fertilising products, which would extend the scope of existing legislation, notably to cover organic and waste-based fertilisers, and set limits on heavy metals and contaminants in fertilising products. At its March II 2019 plenary session, the European Parliament is expected to vote on the agreement reached on the file after trilogue negotiations.

Background

Fertilising products are used to improve plant growth, mainly in agriculture. European Commission [estimates](#) indicate that, among fertilising products, inorganic fertilisers (composed of synthetic chemicals and/or minerals) account for 80 % of market value. Fertilisers deliver important benefits, notably with regard to increased crop yields. There are, however, challenges associated with their use, such as nutrient loss (with adverse impacts on the climate, human health and biodiversity as well as air, water and soil quality), security of supply, and in some cases, the presence of harmful chemicals, such as cadmium in phosphate fertilisers.

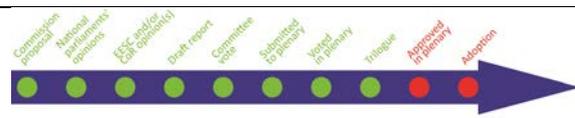
European Commission proposal

As announced in its 2015 [circular economy action plan](#), the Commission put forward a [proposal](#) in March 2016 for a revised EU regulation on fertilisers. Its objective was two-fold: to incentivise large-scale fertiliser production from domestic organic or secondary raw materials by transforming waste into nutrients for crops; and to introduce harmonised cadmium limits for phosphate fertilisers. The proposal would extend the scope of existing rules, mainly addressing inorganic fertilisers, and apply to a wide range of fertilising products, including those derived from recycled bio-waste and nutrients. It brings the conformity assessment and market surveillance in line with the '[new legislative framework](#)' for products on the internal market. It introduces, for all CE-marked fertilisers, specific harmonised requirements on quality (e.g. on minimum nutrient content or organic matter content), safety (e.g. maximum limits for heavy metals, including cadmium; contaminants and impurities) and labelling (e.g. on actual nutrient content and forms). As regards cadmium content in phosphate fertilisers, the proposal sets an initial limit of 60 mg cadmium/kg phosphorous pentoxide, to be tightened to 40 mg/kg after three years, and to 20 mg/kg after 12 years.

European Parliament position

Parliament adopted its [position](#) in October 2017, backing the proposal to gradually reduce cadmium levels in fertilisers to 20mg/kg, but with longer transition periods. Interinstitutional negotiations delivered an [agreement](#) on 20 November 2018. It was agreed that the limit for cadmium content in phosphate fertilisers, set at 60 mg/kg, will apply as from the date of application of the regulation (i.e. three years after its entry into force). This limit value will be reviewed in order to assess the feasibility of lowering it four years after the date of application. The text also establishes a voluntary 'low cadmium' label for fertilisers with a cadmium content equal to or lower than 20 mg/kg. Another key aspect of the agreement concerns the inclusion, in the scope of the regulation, of industry by-products as fertiliser input. The text, approved by Coreper on 12 December 2018 and by Parliament's Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection on 22 January 2019, now awaits a vote during the March II plenary. As part of the global agreement, the European Commission is expected to make an oral statement on end-of-livestock manure criteria.

First-reading report: [2016/0084\(COD\)](#); Committee responsible: IMCO; Rapporteur: Mihai Țurcanu (EPP, Romania).



EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service

Author: Vivienne Halleux, Members' Research Service
PE 635.584 – March 2019



This document is prepared for, and addressed to, the Members and staff of the European Parliament as background material to assist them in their parliamentary work. The content of the document is the sole responsibility of its author(s) and any opinions expressed herein should not be taken to represent an official position of the Parliament. Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the European Parliament is given prior notice and sent a copy. © European Union, 2019.

eprs@ep.europa.eu (contact) <http://www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu> (intranet) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank> (internet) <http://epthinktank.eu> (blog)