



## MEPs approve pesticides legislation

**The European Parliament today approved new EU pesticides legislation which will increase the number of pesticides available in Member States, while in due course banning the use of certain dangerous chemicals in these products. Measures to ensure the safer use of pesticides in daily life will also be introduced.**

Voting at second reading on the basis of agreements reached with the Council in December, MEPs overwhelmingly approved a regulation on placing plant protection products on the market as well as a directive on the sustainable use of pesticides.

**Toxic chemicals will be banned but producers can sell more easily across borders**

The key points of the regulation, which deals with the production and licensing of pesticides, are as follows.

- A positive list of approved "active substances" (the chemical ingredients of pesticides) is to be drawn up at EU level. Pesticides will then be licensed at national level on the basis of this list.
- Certain highly toxic chemicals will be banned unless exposure to them would in practice be negligible, namely those which are carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction, those which are endocrine-disrupting, and those which are persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic (PBT) or very persistent and very bioaccumulative (vPvB).
- For developmental neurotoxic and immunotoxic substances, higher safety standards may be imposed.
- If a substance is needed to combat a serious danger to plant health, it may be approved for up to five years even if it does not meet the above safety criteria.
- Products containing certain hazardous substances are to be replaced if safer alternatives are shown to exist. MEPs successfully demanded a shorter deadline for their replacement, of three years rather than five.
- Substances likely to be harmful to honeybees will be outlawed.

Manufacturers and pesticide users will benefit because:

- Member States will be able to license pesticide products at national level or through mutual recognition.
- The EU will be divided into three zones (north, centre and south) with compulsory mutual recognition within each zone as the basic rule. This will make it easier for manufacturers to gain approval for their products across borders within a given zone and thus make more pesticides available to users more quickly.
- However, following pressure from MEPs, individual States will be entitled to adopt additional conditions or restrictions on the use of new pesticides approved within their zone, and even refuse approval for pesticides if they can adduce special environmental or agricultural circumstances.

- Product approval times will be speeded up, as Member States will have to decide on mutual recognition within 120 days. Until now there has been no deadline.

The new legislation will only gradually supersede existing EU law. Pesticides that can be placed on the market under current legislation will remain available until their existing authorisation expires. There will thus be no sudden or large-scale withdrawal of products from the market. The agreement with Council was based on a scientific assessment by the Swedish Chemicals Agency that only around 22 dangerous substances are likely to be removed from the market as a result of the new safety criteria.

Hiltrud Breyer (Greens/EFA, DE), the MEP who steered this legislation through Parliament, said: "This agreement is a win-win situation, not only for the environment, public health and consumer protection but also for the European economy, since it will lead to more innovation, placing the EU at the forefront of this sector".

## Reducing pesticide use and managing it better

The main points of the directive on the sustainable use of pesticides are as follows.

- The principle of Integrated Pest Management is laid down, i.e. the promotion of non-chemical pest control methods such as crop rotation, to be used wherever possible as alternatives to pesticides.
- Member States must adopt National Action Plans for reducing "risks and impacts" of pesticide use on human health and the environment, including timetables and targets for use reduction. MEPs dropped their demand for a specific reduction target of 50% for chemical substances of particular concern, to help secure a deal with the Council.
- Aerial crop spraying will in general be banned, albeit with exceptions subject to approval by the authorities. No spraying will be allowed in close proximity to residential areas.
- Member States must take measures to protect the aquatic environment and drinking water supplies from the impact of pesticides. These are to include "buffer zones" around bodies of water and "safeguard zones" for any surface and groundwater used for drinking water. There must also be protected areas along roads and railways.
- The use of pesticides must be minimised or prohibited in specific areas used by the general public or by vulnerable groups, such as parks, public gardens, sports and recreation grounds, school grounds and playgrounds and in the close vicinity of healthcare facilities.
- New rules are introduced on the training of pesticide users and salespeople, on handling and storage, on information and awareness-raising and on the inspection of pesticides application equipment.

The directive must be implemented by the Member States by early 2011. The MEP responsible for its passage through Parliament, Christa Kläß (EPP-ED, DE), said "This directive is step in right direction to protect European consumers and the environment. The aim is to use as few pesticides as possible, but at the right time and in the right dosage." She stressed "Risk management is the key, with training for professional users and adequate information for private users".

Both pieces of legislation must now be endorsed by the Council but this should be a formality in view of the agreement reached in December.

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