

**Question for written answer E-003169/2017
to the Commission**
Rule 130
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Subject: Assessment of the real risks of pyrrolizidine alkaloids

The European Food Safety Authority has recommended that plants that are used as raw materials should contain no or virtually no pyrrolizidine alkaloids – naturally occurring toxins found in certain species of plants. A number of weeds that are very common in the crops we grow and are very difficult to eradicate contain these substances.

Producers have increasingly turned to alternatives to plant protection products (which are ineffective against these weeds) in their farming practices, but they are nowhere near sufficient to meet this new challenge.

Banning pyrrolizidine alkaloids would have a dramatic economic impact on the whole agricultural sector. It would not only lead directly to a drastic rise in production costs, mainly due to the requirement for very labour-intensive manual weeding, but would also have indirect consequences: significant increases in tariffs and problems with sourcing raw materials, since it is impossible technically to totally eliminate all pyrrolizidine alkaloids.

Before legislating, should the Commission not wait for the findings of the ongoing assessment which will specify the real risk posed by the presence of these substances and suggest ways of reducing the potential risk they pose?