

**Question for written answer E-003433/2022  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: The use of difenoconazole by non-EU rice producers supplying to the EU

According to COM(2022)0409<sup>1</sup>, EU trade relationships and negotiations with non-EU countries should include rules on sustainable development to ensure respect for social justice, human rights, labour and environmental standards. However, trade in agricultural products, such as rice, too often falls short of trade and sustainable development (TSD) commitments<sup>2</sup>, since imports do not meet the same environmental standards as products produced in the EU.

This is the case with difenoconazole, a fungicide used in rice production. The Commission has again extended its approval by a year, without adopting clear measures on substitute substances nor carrying out mandatory risk assessments.

The agricultural use of difenoconazole is proven to cause health concerns and to have negative environmental impacts. Difenoconazole is commonly used by rice farmers in wetlands such as the Ebro Delta even though, under the European Green Deal and the farm to fork strategy, the fungicide has been banned and there are no approved alternatives.

1. Given increasing rice imports to the EU (up 1.6 million tonnes in 2021-22<sup>3</sup>), what will the Commission do to prevent lower environmental standards in non-EU countries negatively affecting European rice producers?
2. Is the Commission planning to protect EU producers from unfair competition by including clear and equitable TSD clauses on biocides, such as difenoconazole, in its trade agreements with the main exporters of rice to the EU?

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM\(2022\)409&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM(2022)409&lang=en)

<sup>2</sup> [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/development-and-sustainability/sustainable-development/sustainable-development-eu-trade-agreements\\_en#tsd-review-2021](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/development-and-sustainability/sustainable-development/sustainable-development-eu-trade-agreements_en#tsd-review-2021)

<sup>3</sup> <https://agridata.ec.europa.eu/extensions/DashboardRice/RiceTrade.html>