

**Question for written answer P-006069/2013  
to the Commission**  
Rule 117  
**Anne Delvaux (PPE)**

Subject: Bee health

While welcoming the temporary ban, adopted by the Commission on 24 May 2013 and coming into force on 1 December 2013, on the three neonicotinoids - clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiametoxam - acknowledged to be the most harmful to honeybees in Europe, I believe that the long-running issue of 'bee-killing pesticides' has not been resolved once and for all. The moratorium on using these three nicotonooids is certainly a decisive first step in the right direction, and the Commission has taken a responsible decision based on the precautionary principle; but we must move towards a permanent blanket ban. The fact is that only a blanket ban will end the exposure of non-target insects to what are systemic compounds which remain in the soil and are taken up into nectar and pollen over the years. We must continue to keep a very close eye on this, furthermore, given the Commission's announcement of a review of the restrictions, within two years at the latest, in order to take account of 'relevant' scientific and technical developments.

What, however, does the Commission propose doing, now, in connection with all the other pesticides which have come in for scathing criticism?

On 27 May 2013 the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published its opinion on the risks posed to bees by fipronil (a pesticide marketed by BASF under the trade name 'Régent' and banned by France for seed coating as long ago as 2005). The EFSA opinion on fipronil reports major deficiencies in what is known about the substance's potential effects on honeybees, pointing out, with regard to the risks to foraging bees from exposure to nectar and pollen in treated plants, that 'the available studies - field and semi-field - had weaknesses and thus were insufficient to establish the level of risk ...'. The EFSA opinion infers therefore that the regulatory tests to assess the risks of new generations of pesticides, such as fipronil, are unable to determine their potential effects on bees. What, accordingly, does the Commission propose to do?

Applying the precautionary principle again would be most sensible, to my mind, and unquestionably would be in keeping with the Commission's overall strategy, adopted in 2010, to combat the decline in Europe's bee populations.