



Neonicotinoids: what do we need in Europe to open our eyes and ban these unsafe pesticides for the environment?

The Member States of the EU did not achieve on the 15th of March a decision for the ban of three widely used insecticides directly linked to bee losses. 13 Member States voted in favour of the Commission's proposal, i.e. for the ban of the three neonicotinoids: imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam. Unfortunately, 5 Member States abstained and 9 opposed to the proposal, launching a new period of negotiation. In the meanwhile, these pesticides continue on the market. The European Beekeeping Coordination is extremely disappointed with the outcome of the vote.

What is the EU waiting for in order to protect ourselves from massive bee-killing pesticides? The European legislation states that pesticides can be withdrawn of the market if science shows that they create unacceptable effects on bees and impact biodiversity and the ecosystem¹.

The European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) itself, scientific experts of DG Health & Consumers and watchdog of EU's safety, have recognized a high risk of these neonicotinoid insecticides on bees based on scientific proof². However, the EU was unable to move and take measures to ban the neonicotinoids. That is why, it seems that 14 Member States would rely more on the arguments provided by the pesticide industry than those provided by the scientific advisor of the Commission.

A period for negotiations regarding the Commission's proposal starts now. Considering the long persistence of these pesticides in the environment (e.g. clothianidin up to 19 years³), their wide distribution in the environment and their high toxicity to bees (over 7.000 times that of DDT), the selective ban of neonicotinoids over two years proposed by the Commission was not considered as ideal by beekeepers, but better than nothing. Currently, beekeepers have serious concerns about the possible "decaf" proposal that may end up after this compromise period.

The European Beekeeping Coordination hopes that the European political decisions being taken will be based on major European pillars, which are the precautionary principle and scientific-based judgments.

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1 Regulation (EC) 1107/2009 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 21 October 2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market and repealing Council Directives 79/117/EEC and 91/414/EEC

2 Conclusion on the peer review of the pesticide risk assessment for bees for the active substance clothianidin, imidacloprid, thiamethoxam - EFSA (2013)
http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/130116.htm?utm_source=homepage&utm_medium=infocus&utm_campaign=bee_health

3 Rexrode M, Barrett M, Ellis J, Gabe P, Vaughan A, Felkel J, Melendez J: EFED risk assessment for the seed treatment of clothianidin 600FS on corn and canola. United States Environmental Protection Agency, 20 February 2003.