



## PRESS RELEASE

Louvain la Neuve, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

### “The Great Pesticide Debate”, or how journalism turns into the Roman circus

A “Great Pesticide Debate” was held on today, 16<sup>th</sup> of November in Brussels for stakeholders of the agricultural and environmental sector in Europe. The event was organised by the European branch of the political web and paper media organisation Politico. It was also sponsored by the European Crop Protection Association ([ECPA](#)), the European lobby for pesticides that counts among its members companies such as Syngenta, Bayer and Dow AgroSciences.

During the debate, two teams, the “proposing team” and the “opposing team”, debated one assertion, i.e. “Slashing pesticides use will prevent farmers from providing enough safe and affordable food”. Each team was composed of an MEP, a farmer and a representative of an either anti- or pro-pesticide organisation. The audience was also involved in the debate, through the possibility to react on Twitter or ask questions to the speakers but also through a vote at the beginning and the end of the debate, in order to measure if the debate contributed in changing their opinion over pesticides. In short, the debate was merely a show setting pro-pesticides representatives against anti-pesticides representatives so the audience could watch the bloodshed.

At Bee Life we were expecting such a scenario and we heavily question this simplistic approach of a debate. We see only one purpose to it: raising ever more tensions on the issue of pesticides and digging ever bigger trenches between stakeholders: farmers (organic and conventional), agro-chemical industries, NGOs, institutions and the general public.

The genuine question arising from this is: who benefits from this debate? As we can all imagine, both sides never reached an agreement on stage and happily shook each other’s hand while smiling at the cameras by the end of the debate. Indeed, it ended up with each side standing strong on its convictions and resulted in a waste of time and money, which was emphasised by the final vote of the audience where it was clear that nobody changed their mind. However, those winning are those benefitting from the status quo: while spending time on talking, nobody acts and the situation remains unchanged. And what is the situation today? High use of increasingly toxic pesticides, contamination of the environment, danger for human health and strong decline of biodiversity.

At Bee Life we would wish a more constructive approach, where **independent** science is taken into consideration and no time is wasted in discussing things that have already been proven. The issue of food production cannot be presented in such a simplistic manner and European farmers do not need to feed the world. We would wish events where stakeholders can calmly exchange views and that result in strong policy initiatives and a change of paradigm. Let us hope that the next discussions on pesticides will not repeat the errors of this one.

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