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Flupyradifurone : second bee-toxic neonicotinoid authorized by DG Sante in 3 months...

As we learned today, on 9 October 2015, the European Commission and Member States have authorised Flupyradifurone, a new neonicotinoid insecticide. Again, this substance did not go under any proper evaluation for its chronic and sub-lethal toxicity on honey bees or wild bees. As it did in July on Sulfoxaflor, DG Sante disregarded the risk posed by this systemic and persistent insecticide on pollinators.

In May 2013, the European Commission banned 3 bee-toxic neonicotinoid insecticides. The decision was based on their toxicity to bees as well as on many data gaps on bee-toxicity, including bumble bees and solitary bees. This unfortunately did not mean the end of the neonicotinoids' era.

Bayer CropsScience introduced an authorisation request in the Netherlands in 2012 for its new insecticide, flupyradifurone. Bayer studies show that the contact of bees to this chemical induced behavioural changes and increased honey bees' mortality. Dutch authorities identified flaws in the design of studies hampering to make conclusions on the safety of the product.

Being systemic, bees will be exposed to the product through nectar, pollen and plant exudates. The European Food Safety Authority concluded that "a high risk from the oral route of exposure could not be excluded". Furthermore, virtually no data on wild bees (bumble bees, solitary bees) was provided despite of the fact these essential pollinators are generally more susceptible to insecticides than honey bees. Other data gaps exist on the safety of this product.

Francesco Panella, president of Bee Life, criticized the schizophrenia of European institutions, restricting the uses of certain molecules for their risk to bees and gaps in knowledge, while authorising similar molecules in the same situation.

Martin Dermine, PAN Europe's bee expert said: "On request of DG Sante, the European Food Safety Authority has published in 2013 a new Guidance Document on the risk assessment of pesticides on bees. This document would permit to better protect our pollinators - including bumble bees and solitary bees - against toxic chemicals. The implementation of this more-than-two-years-old document is continuously being blocked either by Member States or by the Commission itself. In the meantime, neonicotinoid pesticides like sulfoxaflor and now flupyradifurone are being authorised without a proper risk assessment and despite EFSA's comments either on their toxicity or on the lack of data to assess their safety."

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