

Final hurdle cleared towards EU blacklist

After years of discussion and lobbying, the European Parliament has decided to remove the most hazardous pesticides from its markets.

Elliott Cannell reports on this much-welcomed decision.

In one of the final legislative acts of the 2004-2009 Parliamentary session, the European Parliament met on 13 January to confirm its support for a new deal on forthcoming EU pesticides legislation.

Voting in Strasbourg, Members of the European Parliament endorsed a raft of measures including the creation of an EU pesticide blacklist designed to remove the most hazardous pesticides from use in EU food production. The development means Parliament has now cleared the final hurdle in establishing future protocols for the authorisation and use of pesticides.

'After nearly three years of discussions the EU is close to eliminating dietary and occupational exposure to the worst carcinogenic and mutagenic pesticides', said Elliott Cannell, spokesperson for the Pesticide Action Network Europe.

'We are glad that MEPs have seized this unique opportunity to phase out pesticides

that can play a role in the cancer pandemic and growing fertility problems', said Monica Guarinoni, Deputy Director at the Health and Environment Alliance.

The measures endorsed by Parliament also offer far greater protection for Europe's honeybees. Bees are essential for the pollination of up to 80 million tonnes of EU food produce – yet industry figures reveal up to 20% of pesticides may be toxic to bees.

While the new deal on pesticides includes many measures designed to better protect public health and the environment, other elements have been greatly diluted during the decision-making process.

'Perhaps my greatest regret is that Parliament agreed to go soft on pesticides linked with neurological and immunological damage to the development of the unborn child', said Monica Guarinoni.

'The agreement also undermines the rights of national governments to take local

authorisation decisions, thus opening the door for industry to take aggressive legal action against national decisions that don't go its way', said Elliott Cannell.

So which pesticides will make it onto the EU pesticides blacklist included in the forthcoming Regulation? It will target those:

- classified as carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction (categories 1 and 2) by the European Chemicals Bureau
- substances with endocrine disrupting properties (expected to include actives which meet the criteria of ED Category 1 [COM(1999)706])
- substances considered 'Persistent, Bioaccumulative and Toxic' (PBT)
- substances considered 'Persistent Organic Pollutants' (POPs)
- substances considered 'very Persistent and very Bioaccumulative' (vPvB)

In February 2008, PAN Europe became the first stakeholder group to publish a list of active substances which it expects to be included under the EU pesticides blacklist. Six months later the Swedish Government published its own analysis. Both lists contain 23 active substances (roughly 5% of active substances currently authorised for use in the European Union) although the identity of the chemicals included differs significantly. Further clarification is expected during the establishment of 'Implementation Rules' – a process set to begin in a few months time but which could take several years to complete.

Table 1. Blacklist as predicted by PAN Europe and the Swedish government

Active Substance	Use	Hazard	PAN Europe	Sweden	Active Substance	Use	Hazard	PAN Europe	Sweden
2,4-DB	H	EDC	✓		Mancozeb	F	EDC	✓	✓
Acetochlor	H	EDC	✓		Maneb	F	EDC	✓	✓
Amitrole	H	EDC	✓	✓	Metam-sodium	F	EDC	✓	
Bifenthrin	I	PBT/ POP	✓	✓	Metconazole	F	EDC		✓
Carbendazim	F	M2,R2	✓	✓	Metiram	F	EDC	✓	
Deltamethrin	I	EDC	✓		Metribuzin	H	EDC	✓	
Dinocap	F	R2	✓	✓	Molinate	H	EDC		✓
Epoxiconazole	F	EDC		✓	Pendimethalin	H	PBT		✓
Fenarimol	F	EDC	✓		Picloram	H	EDC	✓	
Flumioxazin	F	R2	✓	✓	Procymidone	F	R2, EDC	✓	
Flurprimidol	O	EDC		✓	Quinoxifen	F	vPvB/ POP		✓
Flusilazole	F	R2	✓	✓	Tebuconazole	F	EDC		✓
Glufosinate	H	R2	✓	✓	Tepraloxymidim	H	EDC		✓
Ioxynil	H	EDC	✓	✓	Thiaclopid	I	EDC		✓
Iprodione	F	EDC		✓	Thiram	F	EDC	✓	
λ-cyhalothrin	I	EDC	✓		Tralkoxydim	H	EDC		✓
Linuron	H	R2, EDC	✓	✓	Warfarin	R	C1	✓	
Lufenuron	I	PBT/ vPvB		✓					

H - herbicide; I - insecticide; F - fungicide; R - rodenticide; O - other

EDC - endocrine disrupting chemical; M2 - category 2 mutagen; R2 - category 2 reprotoxin; PBT - persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic; POP - persistent organic pollutant; vPvB - very persistent and very bioaccumulative; C1 - category 1 carcinogen