



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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## Bee Health: EU takes additional measures on pesticides to better protect Europe's bees

A Commission proposal to restrict the use of Fipronil, an insecticide which has recently been identified as posing an acute risk to Europe's honey bee population, was backed by Member State experts meeting today in the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health. This proposal follows a scientific risk assessment carried out by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) that was published on 27 May 2013 which identified that seeds treated with pesticides containing Fipronil pose an acute risk to Europe's honey bee population.

Tonio Borg, Commissioner for Health said "A few weeks ago, in the aftermath of the restriction on use of neonicotinoids, I pledged to do my utmost to protect Europe's honey bee population and today's agreement with Member States, not only delivers on that pledge but marks another significant step in realising the Commission's overall strategy to tackling Europe's bee decline."

23 Member States supported the restriction, 2 Member States voted against and 3 Member States abstained during today's standing committee vote.

### The Measure

- Restricts the crops where Fipronil can be used as a seed treatment;
- Authorisations may be granted for the treatment of seeds that will only be sown in greenhouses. However, this exception does not apply to leeks, shallots, onions and brassica vegetables (such as Brussel sprouts, cauliflower or broccoli), where treated seeds can also be sown in the field, as the harvest of these crops takes place before flowering;
- The treatment of maize and sunflower seeds will no longer be authorised.

### Next Steps

It is now for the Commission to adopt this measure in the coming weeks. Following this, the measure will be published in the EU Official Journal and the restriction will apply from 31 December 2013. Seeds which have been treated can be sown up until 28 February 2014. **National authorities are responsible** for ensuring that the restrictions are correctly applied.

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## Background

This latest EU-wide restriction comes in the wake of a recent Commission decision to restrict the use of three pesticides belong to the neonicotinoid family which will come into force on 1 December 2013 as well as a guidance document on [a risk assessment of plant protection products on bees](#) published by EFSA on 12 July 2013.

Today's measure forms part of the Commission's overall strategy<sup>1</sup> to tackle the decline of Europe's bee population. Since the publication of the **Commission's bee health strategy in 2010**, several actions have been taken or are underway. These include: the designation of an EU Reference Laboratory for bee health; increased EU co-financing for national apiculture programmes, co-financing to carry out surveillance studies in 17 voluntary Member States (€3.3 million were allocated in 2012) and EU research programmes such as BeeDoc and STEP which look into the multifactorial aspects that could be attributed to Europe's bee decline.

Pesticides have been identified as one of several factors which may be responsible for the decline in number of bees. Other factors also include parasites, other pathogens, lack of veterinary medicines or sometimes their misuse, apiculture management and environmental factors such as lack of habitat and feed and climate change.

### For more information:

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/liveanimals/bees/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/liveanimals/bees/index_en.htm)

### EFSA's website:

<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3158.htm>

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<sup>1</sup> Commission Communication on Honeybee Health COM(2010) 714 final