

PRESS RELEASE

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No Better Regulation for Plant Protection Products?

European Parliament's vote on the pesticide package neglects needs of farmers and seed companies

The European Parliament's vote in first reading on three complementary legislative texts related to the authorisation and sustainable use of Plant Protection Products (PPPs) is causing massive criticism from farmers, seed and crop protection companies alike.

"You can have the best intentions and still get things seriously wrong – this is exactly what happened here" Garlich von Essen, Secretary General of ESA, the European Seed Association, comments on the outcome of the vote on the new legal framework for the authorisation of PPPs.

The seed industry had campaigned hard to include provisions in the new legislation that would allow for an EU-wide mutual recognition of authorisations for specific seed treatment applications. Such seed treatment applications regularly reduce the amount of active chemical ingredients used by up to 90% in comparison to classical field sprayings. The seed industry has for along time underlined that the technology actually suffers from the fact that it only involves such low amounts of pesticides as this often makes today's country-by-country authorisation process economically unviable, in particular for smaller markets. *"Currently, the seed industry is stuck between the European seed marketing legislation that theoretically establishes a true Common Market for seed and the old Directive on plant protection products that in practice knows no enforceable mutual recognition of authorisations."* von Essen explains the dilemma faced by Europe's seed companies. As seed treatment is more and more becoming the state of the art technology and preferred choice of farmers and growers worldwide, the problem is set to increase.

Another serious point of criticism from plant breeders, seed producers and farmers is the missing provisions for so-called Minor Uses, i.e. a facilitated extension of existing authorisations to other, often smaller crops and specific uses such as breeding or seed production. *"Europe's plant breeders and farmers have worked hard to develop the large number of niche markets that take account of the growing diversity of European consumers' wishes. For many of these very small markets, there is no economic interest of crop protection companies to file expensive applications. Without a workable provision for such Minor Uses, we risk loosing this home grown production to imports from third countries"* von Essen warns.

The seed industry is now looking to the Council for a more balanced and practical approach than the one adopted by the Parliament. Von Essen is still hopeful: *"Consumer and environmental protection and a competitive, sustainable seed and crop protection and agricultural production can be achieved together,"* he argues - *"in fact, seed treatment solutions are possibly the best available tool to do just that"*.

ESA

ESA is the voice of the European seed industry, representing the interests of those active in research, breeding, production and marketing of seeds of agricultural, horticultural and ornamental plant species.

Membership

Its membership consists of more than 50 direct company members and 35 national seed associations standing for several hundreds of seed enterprises all over Europe, the vast majority of them being small and medium sized businesses (SMEs).

Mission

ESA's mission is to work for effective protection of intellectual property rights relating to plants and seeds, fair and proportionate regulation of the European seed industry and freedom of choice for customers (farmers, growers, industry and consumers) in supplying seeds as a result of innovative, diverse technologies and production methods.

More information

For more information on ESA, its membership and work, please consult ESA's

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