

Press release – MEPs block member states' move to weaken bee protection from pesticides



The European Commission's [draft proposal](#) was intended to incorporate into EU law the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) 2013 [guidance](#) to cut the use of pesticides that harm bees. The guidance indicated how pesticides should be tested, in order to protect bees from both acute and chronic exposure. Pesticides would remain available on the market only if they pass these new tests.

However, most EU member states opposed the provisions, forcing the Commission into a compromise to keep on board only provisions that protect bees against acute exposure.

"It is unacceptable that Member States oppose the full implementation of the 2013 EFSA bee guidance", says a Parliamentary [resolution](#) adopted on Wednesday. The draft "only introduces modifications (...) with regard to acute toxicity to honeybees, but remains silent on chronic toxicity to honeybees, as well as on toxicity to bumble bees and solitary bees". Moreover, the Commission's text "does not represent the most recent developments in scientific and technical knowledge" and "would not change the level of protection" already in place, says the text.

MEPs also stress that the European Commission should not have given in and should have made full use of its powers, as the 16 member states impeding the application of the protection criteria did not form a qualified majority.

The resolution therefore calls on the Commission to table new legislation based on the latest scientific and technical knowledge.

Quote

“By opposing evaluation criteria which are far too weak given the danger that pesticides pose to bees, we wanted to ask a simple question: are we serious about protecting the environment? Are we serious about protecting living organisms? Are we serious about the Green Deal?” said Environment Committee Chair Pascal Canfin (Renew, FR). “The result is very clear: thanks to our mobilisation, a very large majority of the European Parliament did not want watered-down legislation on the protection of bees. We are now asking the Commission to review its text, and to present us with legislation that eliminates pesticides that pose the greatest danger to pollinators”, he added.

Next steps

Parliament blocked the Commission proposal by adopting the resolution with an absolute majority of its members, with 533 votes to 67 and 100 abstentions. The European Commission now has to submit a new proposal.

Background

Members highlight that [according to the Commission](#), there is a “dramatic decline in the occurrence and diversity of all kinds of European wild insect pollinators, including wild bees, hoverflies, butterflies and moths. Numerous pollinator species are extinct or threatened with extinction”.

In the EU alone, around 84 % of crop species and 78 % of wild flower species depend, at least in part, on animal pollination. Up to almost EUR 15 billion of the EU’s annual agricultural output is directly attributed to insect pollinators.