

Pesticides: framework for Community action to achieve a sustainable use of pesticides

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The Commission presented a report on the Member States' National Action Plans and on progress made in the implementation of Directive 2009/128/EC on the sustainable use of pesticides.

As a reminder, Directive 2009/128/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, adopted in the framework of the [2006 thematic strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides](#), provides for a series of actions to achieve a sustainable use of pesticides in the EU:

- **by reducing the risks and impacts of pesticide use** on human health and the environment;
- **by promoting the use of integrated pest management (IPM)** and alternative methods or techniques, such as non-chemical alternatives to pesticides.

National Action Plans: Member States were required to adopt National Action Plans (NAPs) to implement the Directive for the first time by November 2012. These plans should contain quantitative objectives, targets, measurements and timetables to reduce the risks and impacts of pesticide use.

All Member States have adopted such plans, in many cases with significant delays. The report notes, however, that these **plans differ widely in terms of completeness and coverage**. It concludes that there are significant **shortcomings** in many areas of the plans, for example with regard to:

- **aerial spraying:** aerial spraying is banned and derogations are only granted under strict conditions. In 2014 and 2015, only 14 Member States actually granted derogations. Under these derogations, pesticides were applied on 1.1 million hectares, of which 70 % was agricultural land and 30 % forestry, covering approximately 0.2 % and 0.1 % of the total respective areas. In 2015, almost 95 % of the reported aerial spraying was accounted for by only two Member States: Spain with 339 000 hectares, Hungary with 88 000 hectares. The areas treated under derogation have decreased significantly in recent years. The Commission will nonetheless continue assessing how Member States assess derogation requests, including through audits, to ensure that the strict conditions for these derogations are respected and properly controlled;
- **public information:** all NAPs include planned measures to provide information to the public. Only Romania and Spain establish defined targets in this area. However, it is still possible to improve the dissemination of good practices and for these practices to be used more widely to inform the public and stakeholders;
- **collection of information on case of poisoning:** while Member States generally have systems to gather information on pesticide acute poisoning, the accuracy of this data and its use was questioned. Systems for gathering such information on chronic poisoning are not widely implemented;
- **measures to protect the aquatic environment:** Member States have taken a range of measures to protect the aquatic environment from pesticide use, but in the absence of measurable targets in most national action plans it is difficult to assess the progress achieved;
- **Integrated pest management (IPM):** the eight general principles of integrated pest management are specified in Annex III of the Directive. However, how these principles are to be applied in practice is not explicitly defined. Given that Integrated Pest Management is a cornerstone of the Directive, the Commission expressed concern that Member States have not yet set clear targets and ensured their implementation, including for the more widespread use of land management techniques such as crop rotation.

The report concluded that **Member States need to improve the quality of their plans**, primarily by establishing **specific and measurable targets and indicators** for a long term strategy for the reduction of risks and impacts from pesticide use. These improvements should be included in the revised action plans, which would allow Member States to continuously monitor progress.

The Commission will assist Member States, in particular through:

- the implementation plan on **increasing low-risk plant protection product availability** and accelerating integrated pest management implementation in Member States. This plan, presented by the expert group on phytosanitary protection compatible with sustainable development, set up under the Dutch Presidency, was approved by the Council in June 2016;
- **finalise guidance** on monitoring and surveying of impacts of pesticide use on human health and the environment by the end of 2017 and will consider establishing systems for collecting information on suspected poisoning from pesticides;
- the **development of methodologies to assess compliance with the eight IPM principles**, taking into account the diversity of EU agriculture and the principle of subsidiarity;
- work with Member States in the second half of 2017 towards reaching a consensus on the development of **harmonised risk indicators**;
- **cooperation with Member States to disseminate examples of good practice** in implementation through Working Groups and training, with priority being given under the Better Training for Safer Food programme to strengthen Member States capacity in their understanding and implementation of sustainable use principle.

Building on the series of six fact-finding visits to Member States in 2017, the Commission will **continue evaluating the NAPs and to monitor implementation of the Directive by Member States** through its audits, other actions and follow-up activities to ensure that the objectives of the Directive are being achieved. If necessary, the Commission will give consideration to infringement action.

Following the adoption of revised national action plans, and with the updated information available to it, the Commission will produce a further report which will enable a more comprehensive assessment of the state of implementation of the Directive.