

Implementation of Directive 2009/128/EC on the sustainable use of pesticides

2017/2284(INI) - 12/02/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 546 votes to 79 with 36 abstentions a resolution on the implementation of Directive 2009/128/EC on the sustainable use of pesticides.

National Actions Plans (NAPs)

Parliament noted that the Commission's 2017 progress report identifies significant gaps in the National Action Plans (NAPs) of Member States, suggesting a lower commitment to protecting the environment and health in some countries, possibly resulting in unfair market competition and an undermining of the single market. Members reserved the right to refer non-compliant Member States to the Commissioner for competition. They were concerned by the fact that the NAPs are inconsistent as regards the establishment of quantitative objectives, targets, measures and timetables for the various action areas, making it impossible to assess the progress made. They regretted that only five NAPs set high-level measurable targets, of which four relate to risk reduction and only one to use reduction. Only 11 Member States have produced a revised NAP to date, although the deadline for revision was the end of 2017.

Reduction of farm's dependency

Parliament stressed that the CAP in its current form does not sufficiently encourage and incentivise the reduction of farms' dependency on pesticides and the uptake of organic production techniques. Whilst specific policy instruments in the post-2020 CAP are required in order to help change farmers' behaviour as regards pesticide use, Parliament deplored the fact that the Commission proposal on the new post-2020 CAP does not incorporate the principle of integrated pest management (IPM) in the statutory management requirements of that proposal, stressing that lack of linkage between the directive and the new CAP model will effectively hamper the reduction of pesticide dependency. The resolution highlighted the need to fund agro-ecological methods that make the whole farming system more resilient to pests, noting that the best pesticide volume reductions are likely to arise from systemic changes that reduce susceptibility to pest attack, favour structural and biological diversity over monocultures and continuous cropping, and reduce pest resistance to active ingredients.

Members also noted that EFSA's latest report on pesticide residues in food showed that 97.2 % of samples throughout Europe were within the legal limits under the EU legislation, which bears witness to an extremely rigorous and safe food production system.

Key recommendations

Members called on the Member States to:

- adhere to the established timelines for delivering revised NAPs and to deliver clear quantitative targets and a measurable overall objective of an immediate and long-term effective reduction in pesticide use;
- strictly follow the ban on imports of prohibited pesticides into the EU from third countries, and to increase controls on imported food;
- move forward with the adoption and implementation of harmonised risk indicators as recently proposed by the Commission, in order to properly monitor the reduction impacts of pesticides;

The Commission is called on to:

- deliver on its commitment under the 7th Environment Action Programme to put forward a Union strategy for a non-toxic environment that is conducive to innovation and the development of sustainable substitutes, including non-chemical solutions;
- establish a system for the regular collection of statistical data on pesticide use, impacts of occupational and non-occupational exposure to pesticides on human and animal health, and presence of pesticide residues in the environment, especially in soil and water;
- set up a pan-European Platform on Sustainable Pesticides Use that would bring together sectorial stakeholders and representatives at local and regional level so as to facilitate information-sharing and exchange of best practices in reducing pesticides use;
- immediately prohibit the use of pesticides with active substances that are mutagenic, carcinogenic, or toxic for reproduction, or have endocrine-disrupting characteristics and are damaging to humans or animals;
- take a risk-based approach to the management and use of commonly used plant protection products that is justified by independent, peer-reviewed scientific evidence.

Members called on the Commission and the Member States to:

- place greater emphasis on the promotion of the development, research, registration and marketing of low-risk and biological alternatives, including by increasing funding opportunities within Horizon Europe and the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027;
- promote research programmes aimed at determining the impacts of pesticide use on human health, taking into account the full range of toxicological effects, including immunotoxicity, endocrine disruption and neurodevelopmental toxicity, and focusing on the effects of prenatal exposure to pesticides on children's health;
- no longer allow the use of PPPs in areas used by the general public or vulnerable groups;
- ensure that the 'polluter pays' principle is fully implemented and effectively enforced as regards the protection of water resources.
- place greater emphasis on further investment and research into the development and uptake of precision and digital farming technologies in order to render PPPs more efficient and thus significantly reduce pesticide dependency, as per the aims of the Directive.