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

2006/0132(COD) - 12/07/2006 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to establish a framework for achieving a more sustainable use of pesticides by reducing the risks and impacts of pesticide use on human health and the environment in a way that is consistent with the necessary crop protection.

PROPOSED ACT : Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTEXT : pesticides are active substances and products designed to influence fundamental processes in living organisms and, therefore, have the potential to kill or control harmful organisms such as pests. Consequently, these products can cause undesirable adverse effects on non-target organisms, human health and the environment. The placing of pesticides on the market is comprehensively regulated.

Several Member States have already started implementing measures to reduce the risks from pesticide use but the overall picture is very mixed. Unwanted amounts of certain pesticides are regularly found in environmental media (in particular water) and residues exceeding regulatory limits are sometimes found in agricultural food and feed. Therefore, there is a need for harmonised rules to ensure a level playing field in the EU.

CONTENT : the proposed Directive of the European Parliament and the Council will implement those provisions of the Thematic Strategy that cannot be included in existing instruments or policies, with the exception of the collection of statistical information regarding the placing on the market and use of plant protection products.

The proposed Framework Directive will contain rules on:

- creating National Action Plans to set objectives to reduce hazards, risks and dependence on chemical control for plant protection (National Action Plans - NAPs), which will allow for the necessary flexibility to adapt the measures to the specific situations in the Member States;

- involving stakeholders in the setting up, implementation and adaptation of the NAPs;

- creating a system of training and awareness-raising for distributors and professional users of pesticides in order to ensure that they are fully aware of the risks involved. Better information for the general public through awareness-raising campaigns, information passed on through retailers, and other appropriate measures;

- regular inspection of application equipment in order to reduce adverse impacts of pesticides on human health (in particular as regards operator exposure) and the environment during application;

- prohibition of aerial spraying with derogation possible, to limit the risks of significant adverse impacts on human health and the environment, in particular from spray drift;

- specific measures to protect the aquatic environment from pollution by pesticides;

- defining areas of significantly reduced or zero pesticide use in line with measures taken under other legislation (such as the Water Framework Directive, the Birds Directive, the Habitats Directive, etc.) or to protect sensitive groups;

- handling and storage of pesticides and their packaging and remnants;

- development of Community-wide standards on Integrated Pest Management (IPM), and establishment of necessary conditions for implementation of IPM;

- measuring progress in risk reduction through appropriate harmonised indicators;

- creating a system of information exchange for continuous development and improvement of appropriate guidance, best practices, and recommendations.

The Commission also adopted a proposal for a Regulation revising the 1991 Directive on the placing of plant protection products on the market (see **COD/2006/0136**). In addition, the strategy contains two other new legislative proposals that will be adopted in the near future: a) essential requirements for the protection of the environment to be satisfied by new pesticide application equipment to be placed on the market; b) a new Regulation concerning statistics on plant protection products.

For further information concerning the financial implications of this measure, please refer to the financial statement.