Basic information

2007/2006(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Thematic strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides **Subject** 3.10.09.02 Plant health legislation 3.70.12 Waste management, domestic waste, packaging, light industrial waste	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	BELOHORSKÁ Irena (NI)	03/10/2006

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development	EBNER Michl (PPE-DE)	11/09/2006

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Environment	2785	2007-02-20

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Environment	DIMAS Stavros

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
12/07/2006	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2006)0372	Summary
18/01/2007	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
20/02/2007	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
26/06/2007	Vote in committee		Summary
23/07/2007	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0291/2007	
22/10/2007	Debate in Parliament		
24/10/2007	Decision by Parliament	T6-0467/2007	Summary

24/10/2007	Results of vote in Parliament		
24/10/2007	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2007/2006(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ENVI/6/44530

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE386.500	14/03/2007	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0291/2007	23/07/2007	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0467/2007	24/10/2007	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2006)0372	12/07/2006	Summary

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
CofR	Committee of the Regions: opinion	CDR0316/2006	13/02/2007	

Thematic strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides

2007/2006(INI) - 20/02/2007

The Council welcomed the Thematic Strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides and made a number of conclusions.

In its conclusions, the Council noted that existing legislation fails to address the risks associated with pesticide use, that excessive amounts of pesticides can still be found in the environment – such as in soil and water, and that residues exceeding regulatory limits may still occur in foodstuffs. Accordingly, the Council agrees that it is necessary to reduce risks from pesticides through measures envisaged in the strategy. As such, the Council:

- emphasises that it is important to give a legal framework to Community actions as a contribution to a comprehensive and coherent pesticides policy within each Member State and to fill the gap in the Community's regulatory framework by establishing general and flexible rules to reduce dependence on pesticides and the risks from pesticide use to human health and the environment;

- welcomes the proposed Regulation on plant protection products;

- emphasises that specific measures to protect surface water and groundwater are required to reduce the risk of pesticides to the aquatic environment; and

- stresses the need for the European Commission, Member States and stakeholders to take forward the measures referred to in the Communication.

On a final point, the Council supports the continued work, at an international level, on the International Code of Conduct on the distribution and use of pesticides.

Thematic strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides

2007/2006(INI) - 12/07/2006 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to propose a strategy on safer use of pesticides.

BACKGROUND: the use of pesticides is recognised as posing threats both to human health and the environment. Despite all the efforts that have been made to limit the risks linked to the use of pesticides and to prevent any undesirable effects, unwanted amounts of certain pesticides can still be found in environmental media (in particular soil and water) and residues exceeding regulatory limits still occur in agricultural produce. It is, therefore, necessary to reduce the risks from pesticides to humans and the environment as far as possible by minimising or eliminating, where possible, exposure and by encouraging the research and development of less harmful, including non-chemical, alternatives.

In order to address these concerns, the Commission is proposing a new strategy aimed at improving the way pesticides are used across the EU. It complements existing EU legislation controlling which pesticides can actually be placed on the market.

CONTENT: The main objectives of this thematic strategy are:

- to increase awareness of consumers and society at large about the possible risks from the use of pesticides has recently triggered actions by certain retailers and governments, as well as the Community, to support forms of agriculture and pest management methods that restrict or better target the use of plant protection products, such as organic farming, integrated pest management, or the use of less susceptible varieties. It is important to encourage a rational and precise pesticide use, as well as appropriate crop and soil management practices;
- to improve the behaviour of pesticide users (in particular professional users), who are responsible for a number of misuses including overuses, by ensuring better training and education;
- to improve the quality and efficacy of pesticide application equipment is also necessary to enable pesticide users to optimise the effectiveness of the treatments whilst minimising any adverse impact on human health and the environment.

Furthermore, the use of pesticides is affected – directly or indirectly – by legislation in other policy areas, such as water policy, agricultural policy, worker protection and research. The Thematic Strategy will allow the development of a horizontal and cross-cutting approach, well beyond the relatively limited scope of these specific legal instruments.

The specific objectives of the Thematic Strategy that would contribute to achieving the overall objectives are:

– to minimise the hazards and risks to health and environment from the use of pesticides;

– to improve controls on the use and distribution of pesticides;

– to reduce the levels of harmful active substances including through substituting the most dangerous with safer (including non-chemical) alternatives;

– to encourage low-input or pesticide-free cultivation, among others through raising users' awareness, promoting the use of codes of good practices and promoting consideration of the possible application of financial instruments;

– to establish a transparent system for reporting and monitoring progress made in the fulfilling of the objectives of the strategy, including the development of suitable indicators.

The following measures of the Thematic Strategy will be included in a new Framework Directive of the European Parliament and the Council, which the Commission is proposing in parallel to this Communication:

- establishment of National Action Plans by the Member States which will have to set individual objectives to reduce hazards, risks and dependence on chemical control for plant protection (National Action Plans - NAP);
- involvement of stakeholders in the setting up, implementation and adaptation of the NAP;
- creation of a system of training of professional pesticide users in order to ensure that those who regularly use pesticides are fully aware of the risks linked to this use and take all appropriate measures to find the least harmful means for solving a plant protection problem;
- awareness raising of the general public (with particular attention to non-professional users of pesticides) through awareness raising campaigns and information passed on through retailers to ensure that it is better informed;
- regular and compulsory inspection of application equipment;
- prohibition of aerial spraying to limit the risks of significant adverse impacts on human health and the environment, in particular from spray drift;
- enhanced protection of the aquatic environment;
- defining areas of significantly reduced or zero pesticide use;

- handling and storage of packaging and remnants of pesticides and other measures connected to the handling of products in order to avoid that they are stored or handled carelessly and possibly pollute the environment;
- promotion of low pesticide-input farming and creation by Member States of necessary conditions for implementation of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) by farmers;
- Community-wide standards of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) will be developed and become mandatory as from 2014. Crop-specific standards for IPM will also be developed at Community level, but their implementation will remain voluntary, and Member States could support this activity under rural development;
- measuring progress in risk reduction through appropriate harmonised indicators, which will be made binding for all Member States for regular reporting;
- establishment of a system of information exchange at Community level – a Thematic Strategy Expert Group – involving the Member States and all other relevant stakeholders in order continuously to develop and update appropriate guidance, best practices, and recommendations.

In addition, the Commission will incorporate the following measures of the Thematic Strategy into two separate proposals to be adopted at the latest by 2008:

- improved systems for the collection of information on distribution and use of plant protection products, at the level of active substances, and regular reporting to tackle the lack of reliable data in particular with a view to the calculation of risk indicators;
- essential requirements for the protection of the environment to be satisfied by new pesticide application equipment to be placed on the market.

For the time being, the strategy only deals with the largest group of pesticides – plant protection products (PPPs). At a second stage, its scope may be extended to biocides once the impacts of the 1998 Directive on biocidal products have been evaluated. Biocides, e.g. disinfectants, wood preservatives and antifouling paints, are used to control other harmful organisms than those damaging crops or controlling plants.

The Strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides is one of the seven Thematic Strategies that the Commission is presenting, following the provisions of the EU's 6th Environmental Action Programme. The other strategies cover air pollution, marine environment, waste prevention and recycling, natural resources, the urban environment and soils.

Thematic strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides

2007/2006(INI) - 24/10/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report by Irena **BELOHORSKA** (NI, SK) in response to the Commission's communication on the "Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides". It acknowledged the need for a **European legal framework** in the field of pesticide use as legislation in force has not proved sufficient to achieve the prevention of the hazards and risks to health and environment posed by the use of pesticides.

Parliament pointed out that the use of plant protection products (PPPs) in the EU between 1992 and 2003 remained significant and has not decreased despite the proactive policies successfully pursued in some Member States to reduce the use of farm pesticides. Undesirable amounts of certain pesticides can still be found in the environment, in particular in soil and water; whereas residues exceeding regulatory limit values are still found in agricultural produce. It is important to adopt new legislation based on an approach more firmly centred on **reducing pesticide use** and more ambitious in terms of environmental performance, through the provision of proper support for organic farming and integrated production methods.

Members welcomed the Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides ('Thematic Strategy') but noted that it covers only PPPs, which constitute only a part of pesticides. The Commission should forthwith **include pest control products** (biocidal product types 14-19) as defined in Annex V to Directive 98/8/EC within the scope of the Thematic Strategy, as they pose similar risks to human health and the environment. The Commission was urged to extend the scope of the Thematic Strategy to include other biocides as soon as possible.

Parliament drew attention to the importance of a system of training and education for professional pesticide users, and recommended that the sale and distribution of pesticides be performed under the supervision of a qualified professional or practitioner, and that those transactions be recorded in a register to ensure adequate control of the marketing and use of such products.

Whilst the measures chosen by the Commission were welcomed, Parliament stressed that ambitious **National Action Plans** of the Member States are key elements in the whole process, and regretted that the Commission opted for the exclusion of quantitative and qualitative criteria in the National Action Plans, thus reducing their level of ambition. Without quantitative use reduction targets in the National Action Plans, the notion "reduction of hazards, risks and dependence on pesticides" is very imprecisely defined, and will not push Member States to lower the amount of pesticides used or to prioritise non-chemical alternatives for plant protection and pest and crop management. The Commission should combine the elimination of hazards, risks and dependence on pesticides with quantitative criteria in the National Action Plans, by stipulating that Member States must set their own national targets, timetables and criteria for reducing pesticide use. A commitment to curb the use of PPPs to make them less dangerous and to seek alternative plant protection products which are more environmentally friendly and less harmful to humans and animals will, in addition to environmental and public health benefits, improve the quality of European agricultural products and increase their added value as a result of widespread public awareness and consumer sensitivity regarding these issues.

Parliament went on to regret that, although pesticides are linked to immunological effects, endocrine-disrupting effects, neurotoxic disorders and cancer, **health** is only marginally mentioned in the Thematic Strategy. It emphasised that substances which are carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction, or persistent, bio-accumulative or toxic, or which show endocrine disrupting properties, must not be approved as active substances in pesticides. Foetuses, infants, children as well as pregnant women, the elderly, the chronically sick and those with pre-existing medical problems, as well as users of pesticides and rural residents and communities, are more vulnerable and more exposed to pesticides, especially to cumulative effects

of different types of pesticides, than the rest of the population. Parliament also called for immediate steps to be taken to ensure that sufficiently frequent checks are carried out on **imported goods** (which are generally subject to less strict legislation on the use of PPPs meaning that there is a higher risk of illegal residue levels) in all Member States.

Parliament believed that designation of zones, including drinking water catchment protection areas, with reduced or zero pesticide use and enhanced protection of the **aquatic environment** from pollution by pesticides are necessary in order to avoid unwanted exposure. "Buffer zones" of appropriate width taking account of the different agricultural, geographical and weather conditions should be established. Furthermore, the use of pesticides should be prohibited in and around urban residential areas, public parks, sports grounds, school grounds and children's playgrounds, as the Commission has recognised that the risks to the general public from exposure to pesticides in such areas are high. **Aerial praying** could only be used where it presents clear environmental advantages or where there are no viable alternatives, but that at the same time it should be obligatory to notify the general public about the time of spraying, the amounts and the type of pesticide.

The report called on the Commission to speed up **Community harmonisation of maximum residue levels**, which should be set as low as possible unless it can be proved that even the best techniques and methods available cannot prevent residue below a certain level. Member States were asked to improve the monitoring of pesticide concentrations in food products and environmental media.

Parliament welcomed the proposed invitation to Member States to eliminate provisions allowing Member States to apply reduced **VAT rates for pesticides**, and considered that the Commission should help Member States to introduce appropriate support measures for farmers, to be financed under rural development. It called on the Commission to support the Member States in setting up a system of taxes or levies in order to influence - quantitatively and qualitatively - pesticide use.

Members urged Member States to promote low pesticide-input farming and organic farming, and ensure that professional users of pesticides shift towards a more environment-friendly use of all available crop protection methods, giving priority to non-chemical methods of plant protection and pest and crop management, such as crop rotation and weeding. The Commission and Member States were asked to make adequate resources available for resistance **research**, for the cultivation and supply of a wide range of crops with various resistance characteristics, for research into crop rotation and soil cultivation methods to combat pests and plant diseases and for innovations in the area of plant protection, including non-chemical alternatives. Parliament stressed that global warming is likely to lead to increased pest populations which may increase the frequency and the intensity of outbreaks. Member States were also asked to ensure the safe storage and handling of pesticides.

Parliament urged the Commission to take into account the extremely worrying issue of mortality amongst domestic bees - a problem associated with the use of certain systemic insecticides (containing the active substances Fipronil and Imidacloprid) in order to treat sunflower and maize seeds.

Lastly, it stresses the need to amend European trading standards relating to the shape, size and aesthetic qualities of fresh fruit and vegetables, which encourage the intensive use of pesticides.