

Tonio Borg

Member of the European Commission, responsible for Health and Consumer Policy

Commissioner Borg addresses the Agriculture and Fisheries Council on neonicotinoids and bee health

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

Tonio Borg, European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, attends the Agriculture and Fisheries Council

Brussels, Belgium, 19 March 2013

TUESDAY 19 MARCH 2013

SPEAKING NOTE

President, Ministers,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to update Council on the latest developments as regards the Commission's proposal to restrict the use of three neonicotinoids in order to protect bee health.

During our discussion on 28 January, I announced that the Commission would propose a set of ambitious but proportionate legislative measures in order to address the risks to bee health identified by the European Food Safety Authority.

Following an intense discussion at expert level, a Commission draft measure was distributed to all Member States on 21 February.

On Thursday of last week (14 March) the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health discussed this draft measure.

To accommodate requests from several Member States the Commission took on board a number of amendments to the text – and on Friday (15 March) submitted the amended draft to the Committee for its opinion.

Let me remind Ministers that the draft measure, once adopted, would suspend for two years the use of the three neonicotinoids in bee attractive crops. Exceptions to this would include:

the use of these substances on crops where EFSA has not identified a risk, such as sugar beet; or

winter cereals, which are sown in autumn when exposure to bees is considered to be negligible;

uses in greenhouses; and

foliar applications for bee attractive crops such as fruit trees after flowering.

As Ministers will know, the Commission draft measure failed to achieve a qualified majority. Nevertheless **13** Member States supported the proposal, with **9** opposed and **5** abstentions.

As next step, the Commission will now submit the proposal to the Appeal Committee, where we will further endeavour to find solutions which command the widest possible support.

I am grateful to the UK for informing Council that new field data will soon become available. As indicated to the Standing Committee, the Commission will submit these data as soon as they become available to the European Food Safety Authority for assessment.

President, Ministers,

Let me finish by reiterating that the health of our bees is of paramount importance – we have a duty to take proportionate yet decisive action to protect them wherever appropriate.

End