



EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU

# PAN Europe

*Pesticides Action Network Europe*

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Commission Communication on pesticides delays long-overdue reduction in their use**

(Brussels, July 4, 2002) – Environmental groups warn that the European Commission's Communication "Towards a Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides", which was published today, lacks the main elements and immediate action necessary for an effective reduction in the use of pesticides.

The Communication was supposed to present a first step in the elaboration of the Thematic Strategy on pesticides, as foreseen in the Sixth Environmental Action Plan, but the EEB and PAN Europe believe that it falls well short of introducing any immediate action. It lacks any consideration of new, specific legislation to tackle reduction of the dependency on and the impact of pesticides, as well as lacking targets and timetables for the establishment of national plans "to reduce hazards, risks and dependence on pesticides control".

**"The Communication is a good "issue paper", covering many aspects of sustainable pesticides use, but it effectively results in delaying urgently-needed action to reduce the risks to human and environmental health that are caused by the current irresponsible and intensive use of pesticides,"** said Stefan Scheuer of the EEB. **"We need immediate EU action to curb the growing pesticides use, and we cannot wait until a Thematic Strategy is ready in 2004. In the Commission's ideas, it does not even foresee direct EU-level action to reduce pesticides use, but leaves it up to the individual Member States."**

**"Pesticide use is rising in Europe, as are concentrations of residues on food products. Moreover, as scientific knowledge develops, threats to public health as a result of pesticide use seem to be growing, because of the combined effects and aggregate exposure to the pesticides used,"** said Catherine Wattiez, of PAN Europe. **"Therefore a Directive specifically focusing on a more stringent, preventative approach is urgently needed – and one that clearly defines, in an integrated way, the use-reduction measures to be taken. The integration of the substitution principle only for the most dangerous pesticides in the Pesticides Authorisation Directive review is far from sufficient to secure the necessary reductions of overall pesticides use."**

Pesticides Action Network (PAN) Europe and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) have also strongly challenged the suggestion that GM crops are seen as a means of reducing pesticide use, and said that the paper does not go far enough in promoting alternative methods of reducing pesticide use.

In May 2002, in anticipation of this Communication, The Pesticides Action Network (PAN) Europe and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) - supported by several hundred environmental, health and farmers' groups in Europe - released their suggested text for a new EU Directive to reduce farmers' and other professional users' dependency on pesticides. PAN

Europe and the EEB aim, with this contribution, to speed up the European Commission's development of effective legislation on pesticide use reduction.

PAN Europe and the EEB have invited the Commission and all stakeholders to consider their suggestions for a Directive on measures for reduction of use and of the impacts to health and environment from pesticides.

The summary of the suggested text for a Directive on pesticide use reduction prepared by PAN Europe is annexed to this press release. The complete text for a Directive and its draft explanatory memorandum are to be found on the following web sites: [www.pan-europe.net](http://www.pan-europe.net) or [www.eeb.org](http://www.eeb.org) (go to activities, then to chemicals, then to publications)

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## NOTES

- 1) The Commission proposes that all Member States establish national plans "to reduce hazards, risks and dependence on chemical control, within 2 years" but does not propose any target or timetable. Moreover, Member States are invited to use the most suitable indicators currently available to each of them to report regularly on progress, pending the development of harmonised indicators. PAN Europe and the EEB propose, for each MS, a target of 50% reduction in the frequency of application (use indicator) within 10 years. This is the most straightforward indicator currently available.
- 2) In the Commission Communication, Member States are invited to promote and develop alternatives to chemical control and to examine the potential of GM technology. PAN Europe and the EEB strongly oppose this on the grounds that GM crops are not likely to reduce pesticide use and that they do not represent a sustainable method of farming.
- 3) The Commission invites Member States to develop methods of farming which will help reduce dependence on chemical pesticides, including those integrating Integrated Pest Management (IPM) concept and organic farming, but without any targets or any compulsion for such methods to be taken up. PAN Europe and the EEB wants (i) as basic requirement, the mandatory application of Integrated Crop Management (ICM) for all cultivated land not yet in organic farming, (ii) a target of 30% of all cultivated land in organic farming within 10 years. This would need to be backed by additional financial support from Member States and the Commission for research, advice to farmers, and support for organic conversion.
- 4) The Commission proposes a transparent system for reporting and monitoring the progress made in implementation of national reduction plans. However, no specific prescriptions are proposed in the Communication to ensure access to all information on pesticides issues and public participation to all meetings taking decisions related to pesticides and their use, as requested by PAN Europe and the EEB.

## ANNEX

### SUGGESTED TEXT FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON MEASURES FOR REDUCTION OF USE AND OF IMPACTS TO HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT FROM PESTICIDES

#### *Executive Summary*

The objective of the suggested Directive is to lay down measures which aim to contribute to a high level of protection of human health and the environment as well as to promote sustainability, through reduction of dependency on and, wherever possible, elimination of the use of pesticides.

The suggested Directive would apply only to professional handling and use of pesticides, and in particular 'plant protection products' as defined in Council Directive 91/414/EEC. It is based on the principles enshrined in the EC Treaty, *i.e.*, prevention of pollution by reduction at the source and the precautionary principle. In addition, it proposes the 'No, unless...' principle, *i.e.*, that no pesticides shall be used in the growing of crops or in other pest control applications unless it is determined that no other method, practice or system of control is available to prevent unreasonable pest damage.

To achieve its objective, the suggested Directive proposes

- Mandatory Community-wide targets and timetables for achieving reductions of use of pesticides, initially to be measured by frequency of application ;
- National action plans setting forth how each Member State will achieve the progressive reductions of uses of pesticides according to the targets and timetables in the Directive and in particular for all areas under control of public authorities and for agricultural uses ;
- National studies to determine the feasibility and consequences of various scenarios for the progressive reduction or phasing out the use of chemicals for pest control, and to serve as a basis for Member States to determine how they will achieve the mandatory targets;
- EU-wide and national measures to reduce dependency on chemicals for pest control, including mandatory application of integrated pest management (IPM) for non-agricultural pest control situations and of integrated crop management (ICM) on all cultivated land not yet in organic farming. The measures should include expanded financial support for research and extension on pest control practices that minimise and, where possible, eliminate the use of pesticides and for conversion to organic farming and low input agriculture.
- Mandatory training and certification of dealers and professional users of pesticides including farmers, according to minimum Community standards ;
- Mandatory technical requirements for and regular inspection of pesticide application equipment, storage facilities and use practices, and of dealers;
- Coordinated monitoring and data collection of the impacts of pesticide use on human health and the environment, including long-term research programmes;
- Coordinated systems for collecting information on production, import, export, sales, distribution and use of pesticides, including mandatory record keeping and reporting of all applications of pesticides including amounts used per crop.
- Bans on applications of pesticides by aeroplanes and in pesticide vulnerable zones
- Access to information and public participation in regulatory decision making on pesticides, including for authorisations of plant protection products.