

Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks (SCHER)

Request for an opinion about the potential risks to human health and the environment from the use of calcium cyanamide as fertiliser

1. Background

On 19 November 2012 the Fertilisers Working Group established under the fertiliser Regulation (EC) No 2003/2003 has examined requests from several Member States to clarify the potential impacts of the substance calcium cyanamide on human health and the environment.

A very similar substance (cyanamide) used as plant protection product (PPP) has indeed been banned since 2008¹. During the evaluation of the PPP dossier, concerns had been identified with regard to operator exposure and acute and long-term risks to small herbivorous mammals. A dossier was re-submitted in 2009 within the framework of the PPP Regulation but was eventually withdrawn by industry at the end of 2011. Consequently, PPP containing cyanamide cannot be authorised by the Member States.

Calcium cyanamide is a substance that transforms to cyanamide and calcium hydroxide after application on soils. This substance can be marketed as an EC fertiliser under Regulation (EC) No 2003/2003. Due to the similarities between the two substances, concerns had been expressed by some Member States that the risks identified for cyanamide could potentially also apply to calcium cyanamide.

To address these concerns, the Commission has been asked by the Fertilisers Working Group to consult the Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks (SCHER) for its opinion about the potential risks to human health and the environment from the use of calcium cyanamide as fertiliser.

The manufacturing company has been contacted and has provided information on the use of calcium cyanamide, as well as their critical review on areas of concern for cyanamide identified in the context of the evaluation conducted under Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 (repealing Directive 91/414/EEC), and a list of scientific references. The Commission has also asked the Member States to provide all the information that they dispose of before the end of March 2013.

The EFSA opinion regarding the risk assessment for the active substance cyanamide at the following web-link:

<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsaiournal/doc/1873 .pdf>

¹ Decision 2008/745/EC

2. Terms of reference

Taking into consideration all the available data, SCHER is requested to formulate an opinion about the potential risks to human health and the environment from the use of calcium cyanamide as fertiliser answering to the following questions:

- Does current scientific evidence indicate that the use of calcium cyanamide at the current recommended doses, as described by the company's information paper (with a maximum of 1000 kg/ha for cabbage) could lead to harmful effects for end-users or the environment?
- In view of the risks identified by SCHER, are the protective measures recommended by the manufacturer sufficient to ensure a safe use of calcium cyanamide?
- In case of potential effect on the environment, which application rate per concerned crops should not create any detrimental effect under the relevant soil and climatic conditions?
- In case major gaps are identified in the scientific knowledge of the risks associated with the use of calcium cyanamide, SCHER is invited to suggest how to close those gaps?