RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

of 6 February 2014

on measures to control *Diabrotica virgifera virgifera* Le Conte in Union areas where its presence is confirmed

(2014/63/EU)

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 292 thereof,

Whereas:

(1) *Diabrotica virgifera virgifera* Le Conte (hereinafter: '*Diabrotica*') is a non-native insect pest of maize. It has spread and established in over half of the Union maize growing area.

(2) The measures to prevent the spread of *Diabrotica* within the Union carried out pursuant to Commission Decision 2003/766/EC [1] did not prove to be successful. Moreover, according to an impact assessment carried out by the Commission it is neither feasible to pursue an eradication of this pest from the Union territory nor to prevent its further spread into the areas which are currently free from that harmful organism. Therefore the Commission has decided by Implementing Directive 2014/19/EU [2] and Implementing Decision 2014/62/EU [3] to withdraw the recognition of *Diabrotica* as a regulated harmful organism with quarantine status, by deleting it from Annex I to Council Directive 2000/29/EC [4], and to repeal Decision 2003/766/EC, respectively.

(3) Under Decision 2003/766/EC crop rotation was compulsory only for the eradication of isolated outbreaks of *Diabrotica*. Nevertheless, scientific studies have shown that crop rotation is the most effective technique to also slow down the spread of *Diabrotica* and to reduce its impact. In addition to being an effective method to control *Diabrotica*, crop rotation has several other advantages from an environmental point of view. These include the improvement or maintenance of soil fertility and structure, and the breaking of pest and weed cycles with the potential to reduce the farmers' reliance on chemical inputs of fertilisers and plant protection products. Consequently, crop rotation has also a positive impact on water and air quality, and on biodiversity. However, from other studies carried out on this pest, it became clear that with its further spread there is a potential for increased reliance on insecticides, since in some cases it may be difficult to find an economically attractive alternative crop to maize in the rotation.

(4) Therefore, an effective and sustainable control of *Diabrotica* should be envisaged by Member States, also after the withdrawal of the recognition of *Diabrotica* as a regulated harmful organism with quarantine status. Article 14 of Directive 2009/128/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council [5] provides for Member States to establish appropriate incentives to encourage professional users to implement, on a voluntary basis, crop or sector specific guidelines for integrated pest management, which should be drawn up by public authorities or organisations representing particular professional users. Pursuant to the general principles of integrated pest management, prevention of the occurrence of pests has a key role in reducing the need of intervention with plant protection products. Moreover, sustainable biological, physical and other non-chemical methods should be preferred to chemical methods, if they provide adequate pest control.

(5) In accordance with these general principles of integrated pest management, application of crop rotation, of appropriate monitoring of *Diabrotica* populations and other

[1] Commission Decision 2003/766/EC of 24 October 2003 on emergency measures to prevent the spread within the Community of *Diabrotica virgifera* Le Conte (OJ L 275, 25.10.2003, p. 49).

[2] Commission Implementing Directive 2014/19/EU of 6 February 2014 amending Annex I to Council Directive 2000/29/EC on protective measures against the introduction into the Community of organisms harmful to plants or plant products and against their spread within the Community. See page 30 of this Official Journal.

[3] Commission Implementing Decision 2014/62/EU of 6 February 2014 repealing Decision 2003/766/EC on emergency measures to prevent the spread within the Community of *Diabrotica virgifera* Le Conte. See page 45 of this Official Journal.

[4] Council Directive 2000/29/EC of 8 May 2000 on protective measures against the introduction into the Community of organisms harmful to plants or plant products and against their spread within the Community (OJ L 169, 10.7.2000, p. 1).

[5] Directive 2009/128/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 establishing a framework for Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides (OJ L 309, 24.11.2009, p. 71).

relevant measures preventing spreading of harmful organisms, such as hygiene measures as cleansing the agricultural machinery, should be included in crop or sector-specific guidelines.

(6) Furthermore, in order to enhance the respect by users of Article 55 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council [1] where insecticides are used to control *Diabrotica*, crop or sector specific guidelines for integrated pest management concerning this pest should be in line with the rules on proper use of plant protection products as set out in that provision.

(7) Professional users of plant protection products should have at their disposal information and tools for monitoring *Diabrotica*, as well as advisory services on integrated pest management, including specific prevention and control methods for *Diabrotica*. The results of the monitoring should help farmers to decide whether and when there is still need to apply plant protection measures. It is relevant that robust and scientifically sound *Diabrotica* population threshold values are defined for a region, since these are essential components for decision making.

(8) Member States ensuring, in compliance with Article 5 of Directive 2009/128/EC, that all professional users have access to training on specific subjects should therefore include also the provisions of this Recommendation in the respective training programme.

(9) Research and technological development on tools for the sustainable control of *Diabrotica* should be promoted to ensure more cost effective and environmentally sustainable measures against that harmful organism,

HAS ADOPTED THIS RECOMMENDATION:

1. Member States should take into account the general principles of integrated pest management laid down in Annex III to Directive 2009/128/EC for the control of *Diabrotica virgifera virgifera* Le Conte (hereinafter '*Diabrotica*') in Union areas where its presence is confirmed. For the purposes of this Recommendation 'control' means the suppression of the population density of the pest to a level not causing significant economic losses, with a view to ensuring an economically sustainable production of maize.

2. Member States should ensure that the crop or sector specific guidelines for integrated pest management, drawn up by public authorities or organisations representing particular professional users, concerning *Diabrotica* addressed to farmers of maize and professional users of plant protection products are in line with the rules on proper use of plant protection products as set out in Article 55 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009.

3. Sustainable biological, physical and other non-chemical methods should be preferred to chemical methods, if the former provide satisfactory pest control. Therefore, control of *Diabrotica* by the professional users should be achieved or supported by the following actions:

   (a) crop rotation;

   (b) use of biocontrol agents;

   (c) adaptation of maize sowing date to avoid that germination coincides with larval hatching;

   (d) cleansing of agricultural machinery and removal of volunteer maize plants and other hygiene measures.

   Crop rotation should be preferred in view of its high effectiveness to control *Diabrotica* and its environmental and longer term agronomical benefits.

4. All measures set out in point 3 should be accompanied by monitoring of the presence of *Diabrotica* to identify the need and proper timing for protective actions. Member States should ensure that effective monitoring of the population of *Diabrotica* is carried out using adequate methods and tools. Scientifically sound *Diabrotica* population threshold values should be established regionally, since these are essential components for decision making on the application of any control measures.

5. Member States should ensure, in accordance with Article 14(2) of Directive 2009/128/EC, that professional users of plant protection products have at their disposal information and tools for monitoring *Diabrotica*.

6. Member States should ensure that advisory services on integrated pest management, as provided for in Article 14(2) of Directive 2009/128/EC, provide also specific advice on *Diabrotica* control to all professional users of plant protection products. Member States should also establish appropriate incentives to encourage professional users to implement the crop or sector-specific guidelines referred to in point 2.

[1] Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market and repealing Council Directives 79/117/EEC and 91/414/EEC (OJ L 309, 24.11.2009, p. 1).

7. Member States should ensure that all professional users of plant protection products have access to training concerning the sustainable control of *Diabrotica*. The provisions of this Recommendation should become part of the training ensured by the Member States pursuant to Article 5 of Directive 2009/128/EC.

8. Member States should promote research and technological development on tools for the sustainable control of *Diabrotica*.

Done at Brussels, 6 February 2014.

For the Commission
Tonio BORG
Member of the Commission