Wednesday 15 February 2017

P8_TA(2017)0042

Biological low-risk pesticides

European Parliament resolution of 15 February 2017 on low-risk pesticides of biological origin (2016/2903(RSP))

(2018/C 252/18)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to 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 ([1]), in particular Articles 22 and 47, Article 66(2) and Annex II, point 5 thereof,

— having regard to 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 ([2]), in particular Articles 12 and 14 thereof,

— having regard to the draft Commission regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market as regards the criteria for the approval of low- risk active substances (D046260/01,

— having regard to its resolution of 7 June 2016 on technological solutions for sustainable agriculture in the EU ([3]),

— having regard to its resolution of 7 June 2016 on enhancing innovation and economic development in future European farm management ([4]),

— having regard to the 'Implementation Plan on increasing low-risk plant protection product availability and accelerating integrated pest management implementation in Member States', developed by the Expert Group on Sustainable Plant Protection and endorsed by the Council on 28 June 2016,

— having regard to the Commission's Action Plan against the rising threats from Antimicrobial Resistance (COM(2011)0748) and to the upcoming Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Action Plan to be launched by the Commission in 2017,

— having regard to the question to the Commission on biological low-risk pesticides (O-000147/2016 — B8-1821/2016),

— having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety,

— having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the use of conventional plant protection products is increasingly subject to public debate, due to the potential risks they pose to human health, animals and the environment;

B. whereas the number of active substances available on the EU market used for plant protection is decreasing; whereas EU farmers continue to require a variety of crop protection tools;

([1]) OJ L 309, 24.11.2009, p. 1.
([2]) OJ L 309, 24.11.2009, p. 71.
([3]) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0251.
([4]) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0252.

C. whereas it is important to promote the development of alternative procedures or techniques to reduce dependence on conventional pesticides;

D. whereas preventing food waste is a priority in the EU, and access to appropriate plant protection solutions is essential to preventing damage caused by pests and diseases that results in food waste; whereas, according to the FAO, 20 % of fruit and vegetable production in Europe is lost in the fields ([1]);

E. whereas it is still possible to find undesirable pesticide residues in soil, water and the environment in general, and even a certain percentage of agricultural products of plant or animal origin may contain pesticide residues above the maximum residue levels for pesticides;

F. whereas Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 defines criteria to identify low-risk substances that apply independently of the origin of the substance, and whereas low-risk pesticides could be of biological as well as of synthetic origin;

G. whereas pesticides of biological origin are generally understood to be plant protection products based on microorganisms, botanicals, bio-derived chemicals or semiochemicals (such as pheromones and various essential oils) and their by-products; whereas the present regulatory framework for plant protection products ([2]) does not legally differentiate between biological and synthetic chemical plant protection products;

H. whereas recent scientific studies show that sublethal exposure to certain herbicides may cause negative changes in antibiotic susceptibility in bacteria ([3]) and that a combination of high use of herbicides and antibiotics in proximity to farm animals and insects could drive greater use of antibiotics by possibly compromising the therapeutic effects of the same;

I. whereas low-risk plant protection products of biological origin may constitute a viable alternative to conventional plant protection products, for both conventional and organic farmers, and contribute to a more sustainable agriculture; whereas some plant protection products of biological origin possess new modes of action, which could be beneficial with a view to evolving resistance to conventional plant protection products, and could limit the impact on non-target organisms; whereas low-risk plant protection products of biological origin should be one of the preferred options for non-professional users and for home gardening, together with other non-chemical control or prevention methods;

J. whereas, in order to adequately meet food and feed needs, the use of plant protection products is necessary, and whereas the precautionary principle ([4]) is applied in the procedure for authorising such products and their active substances;

K. whereas the long approval and registration process before commercialisation of low-risk pesticides of biological origin represents an important economic barrier to manufacturers;

L. whereas Integrated Pest Management implementation is mandatory in the Union in accordance with Directive 2009/128/EC; whereas Member States and local authorities should place more emphasis on the sustainable use of pesticides, including low-risk plant protection alternatives;

([1]) FAO (2011) 'Global food losses and food waste'.

([2]) The concept of 'pesticides' also covers biocidal products to which this resolution does not apply.

([3]) e.g. Kurenbach, B., Marjoshi, D., Amábile-Cuevas, C.F., Ferguson, G.C., Godsoe, W., Gibson, P. and Heinemann, J.A., 2015, 'Sublethal exposure to commercial formulations of the herbicides dicamba, 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid, and glyphosate cause changes in antibiotic susceptibility in *Escherichia coli* and *Salmonella enterica* serovar Typhimurium', mBio 6(2):e00009-15. doi:10.1128/mBio.00009-15.

([4]) Article 1(4) of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009.

M. whereas under Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009, active substances are approved at Union level, while the authorisation of plant protection products containing those active substances lies within the remit of the Member States;

N. whereas Article 22 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 allows active substances to be approved as low-risk active substances where they fulfil the general approval criteria and the specific low-risk criteria specified in Annex II, point 5; whereas Article 47 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 provides that plant protection products that contain only low-risk active substances, that do not contain any substance of concern, that do not require specific risk mitigation measures, and that are sufficiently effective, shall be authorised as low-risk plant protection products;

O. whereas at present, only seven active substances classified as 'low-risk' — whereof six are active substances of biological origin — are approved in the Union; whereas the Commission prioritises the evaluation of presumed low-risk active substances in its renewal programme;

P. whereas products containing low-risk active substances of biological origin have been refused authorisation by a certain number of Member States owing to their perceived lower efficacy as compared to synthetic chemical pesticides, without any regard to the ongoing innovation in the sector for low-risk pesticides of biological origin, without considering the resource efficiency benefits for organic farming, and without considering agricultural, health and environmental costs of certain other plant protection products;

Q. whereas the current regulatory framework provides certain incentives for low-risk active substances and low-risk plant protection products, namely a longer first approval period for low-risk active substances of 15 years in accordance with Article 22 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009, and a shorter timeframe of 120 days for the authorisation of low-risk plant protection products in accordance with Article 47 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009; whereas, however, these regulatory incentives only apply at the end of the approval procedure, once an active substance is classified as low-risk;

R. whereas Article 12 of Directive 2009/128/EC provides that the use of pesticides shall be minimised or prohibited in certain specific areas, such as areas used by the general public and protected areas; whereas, in such cases, appropriate risk management measures shall be taken, and the use of low-risk plant protection products and biological control measures shall be considered in the first place; whereas some Member States have, for a long time now, prohibited the use of pesticides in these specific areas;

S. whereas the Commission has submitted to the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (PAFF Committee) a draft regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 as regards the criteria for the approval of low-risk active substances; whereas this draft provides an assumption of low-risk status for active substances that are micro-organisms;

General considerations

1. Stresses the need to increase the availability of low-risk pesticides, including low-risk plant protection products of biological origin in the Union, without further delay;

2. Stresses that farmers need to have a bigger toolbox at hand to protect their crops and to decide which measure will best and most sustainably protect their crops; encourages, therefore, wider use of different tools, including low-risk pesticides of biological origin, following the principles of integrated pest management;

3. Stresses the need to increase the availability of a pest management toolbox for organic farming that complies with the requirements of both organic farming and resource efficiency;

4. Emphasises that consumers' demand for safe food that is both affordable and produced in a sustainable way must be satisfied;

5. Underlines that, in order to promote the development and use of new low-risk plant protection products of biological origin, the evaluation of their efficacy and risks, and of their capacity to respond to the environmental, health-related and economic needs of agriculture, should be designed in a way to provide farmers with an appropriate level of plant protection;

6. Underlines the importance of a public debate about the availability of alternatives to conventional plant protection products and about making a wider choice of substances available to farmers and growers, including low-risk plant protection products of biological origin and other biological control measures, in order to find the solutions that are most viable in environmental, health and economic terms; stresses the necessity to educate on the need to ensure sustainability of crop protection; encourages further research and innovation on low-risk plant protection products of biological origin;

7. Welcomes the 'Implementation Plan on increasing low-risk plant protection product availability and accelerating integrated pest management implementation in Member States', as endorsed by the Council; calls on the Member States, the Commission and the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO) to follow up on the implementation of this plan;

Immediate action

8. Calls for the swift adoption of the draft regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 as regards the criteria for the approval of low-risk active substances that the Commission has submitted to the PAFF Committee; calls on the Commission continuously to update the criteria in line with the most up-to-date scientific knowledge;

9. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to accelerate the evaluation, authorisation, registration and monitoring of the use of low-risk plant protection products of biological origin while maintaining risk assessment at a high level;

10. Invites the Member States to include the use of low-risk pesticides of biological origin in their national action plans on the protection of the environment and of human health;

11. Encourages the Member States to exchange information and good practices deriving from the results of research into pest control, enabling the provision of alternative solutions that are viable in environmental, health and economic terms;

12. Calls on the Commission to identify low-risk substances already on the market;

Revision of plant protection product legislation

13. Welcomes the 2016 Commission REFIT initiative to carry out an evaluation of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009; stresses that this REFIT initiative must not lead to the lowering of health, food safety and environmental protection standards; is concerned that the general revision of the entire Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 in connection with this REFIT initiative could take several years;

14. Stresses the need to revise Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 in order to foster the development, authorisation and placing on the EU market of low-risk pesticides of biological origin; is concerned that the current authorisation process for placing plant protection products on the market is sub-optimal for low-risk pesticides of biological origin; points out that the current registration process for low-risk basic substances sometimes, in practice, acts as a kind of patent, making it difficult to use a product based on the same substance which is not registered in another Member State;

15. Calls on the Commission to submit, before the end of 2018, a specific legislative proposal amending Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009, outside of the general revision in connection with the REFIT initiative, with a view to establishing a fast-track evaluation, authorisation and registration process for low-risk pesticides of biological origin;

16. Highlights the need for a definition, in Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009, of 'plant protection product of biological origin' that covers plant protection products the active substance of which is a microorganism or a molecule existing in nature, either obtained from a natural process or synthesised as identical to the natural molecule, as distinct from plant protection products the active substance of which is a synthetic molecule not existing in nature, irrespective of the method of production;

17. Calls on the Commission, in its report on the evaluation of National Action Plans required under Article 4 of Directive 2009/128/EC establishing a framework for Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides, to identify gaps in the implementation of the Directive by Member States and to include robust recommendations to Member States to take immediate action in order to reduce the risk and impact of pesticide use on human health and the environment and to develop and introduce alternative approaches or techniques with the aim of reducing dependency on the use of pesticides;

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18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.