



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Cabinet of Executive Vice-President Mr Frans Timmermans



Brussels, 10/12/2021
Ares (2021) 6243575

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for your letters and the various attachments addressed to Executive Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioner Kyriakides, in which you call on the Commission to adopt a Communication to foster the implementation of the intentions laid down in Recital 17 of the Plant Protection Products Regulation, i.e. to give incentives to promote the placing on the market of low-risk plant protection products.

The Commission fully shares your concerns as regards the necessary replacement of the more hazardous active substances used in plant protection products, and a political objective has been set in the Farm to Fork Strategy to reduce their use by 50% by 2030. This will be further defined in the forthcoming revision of the Directive on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides. Furthermore, as announced in the report on the REFIT evaluation of the pesticides legislation¹, the Commission has started discussions with Member States to review Annex IV of the Plant Protection Products Regulation and related guidance to increase the efficiency of comparative assessments for products containing active substances that are identified as candidates for substitution.

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¹ https://ec.europa.eu/food/plants/pesticides/refit_en

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The ongoing work to review the approval of active substances has indeed led to the identification of more hazardous substances as candidates for substitution, to the restrictions of use of some other chemical substances but also to the qualification of other substances as low-risk.

For the latter, the Plant Protection Products Regulation already sets out preferential treatment and shorter deadlines for the authorisation of products containing them as low-risk plant protection products. The Commission has already repeatedly invited Member States to give priority to the evaluation of applications for the approval (or renewal of approval) of low-risk active substances and to respect the deadlines for the authorisation of low-risk plant protection products as foreseen in the Regulation.

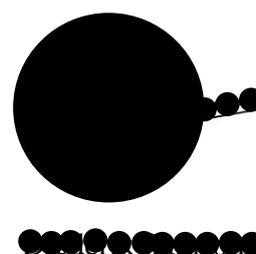
I would like to emphasise that the Commission has initiated a substantial revision of the relevant implementing regulations (related to the approval criteria, data requirements and assessment principles) for micro-organisms, which constitute the biggest group of low-risk active substances, to make these requirements and risk assessment principles more fit for purpose, and adapt them to the specificities and characteristics of micro-organisms which are different from chemicals. This should facilitate and accelerate the processes for their evaluation and reduce the time needed to market them.

The draft revised Regulations were open for comments under the feedback mechanism until 23 November 2021².

Lastly, the Commission has organised training activities under the ‘Better Training for Safer Food’ programme, starting in June 2021, aiming at increasing the expertise of risk assessors in the Member States and in the European Food Safety Authority in evaluating biological active substances and products containing them. We are confident that with a more appropriate regulatory framework and increased expertise amongst the competent authorities, the review and approval of biological active substances and plant protection products can be sped up.

Let me conclude by thanking you for your interest in this important matter and assure you of the Commission’s commitment to reduce the risks from and use of pesticides and foster low-risk pesticides as announced in the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Yours faithfully,



² https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12574-Pesticides-new-data-requirements-for-authorising-products_en