



Women in Europe for a Common Future | **WECF**

To the Members of the ENVI committee of the European Parliament

Date: 29 October 2008

Ref.: 800272/MK/AH

Re: Regulation concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market

Dear member of the European Parliament,

Soon you will be voting on the regulation concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market.

We, as women in the European Union, want to make a strong appeal to you to put priority on the protection of the health of people and particularly of children and future generations.

We have seen the growing evidence amounting from scientific research, that hazardous substances in pesticides are having serious effects on public health and particularly on the health of children – and in much lower doses than previously assumed. The study recently done for the European Parliament, provides a helpful overview of the relevant scientific evidence. (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/studies/download.do?file=22471>)

Contamination before birth and in early childhood can have serious effects on the development of brains and other organs, and can cause disorders of the immune and hormone system. Contamination can also increase the risk to develop cancers, as well as reproductive problems. All these effects are irreversible. Brain damage developed from exposure in your mother's womb will be with you for the rest of your life. The incidence of such effects and diseases is increasing. Warnings by international groups of well known scientists have been issued to policymakers and politicians to stop the use of such hazardous pesticides, to protect the developmental health of children as the most vulnerable group, to protect public health and the health of the farmers and farm workers.

There is evidence that the families of farmers and the farm workers are affected most. Impaired brain development and brain tumors are higher among children of farmers and farm workers. Effects on reproductive health and the development of Parkinson disease in later life have been related to spraying of pesticides.

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NGO status bij ECOSOC /United Nations

It is therefore in the interest of farmers, farm workers and their families that the proposed cut-off criteria, including neurotoxic criteria, are adopted by the European Parliament. This will encourage the use and development of safe pesticides as well as other safe methods of plant protection.

"Laboratory experimental studies using model compounds suggest that many pesticides currently used in Europe...can cause neuro-developmental toxicity," professor Grandjean and two colleagues in Denmark wrote in the journal *Environmental Health* last week. (On the 22nd of October 2008 the scientific journal "Environmental Health" published "Potential developmental neurotoxicity of pesticides" <http://www.ehjournal.net/content/7/1/50> See also the press release at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/environmentNews/idUKTRE49N38O20081024>)

On the 7th of October Prof. Grandjean visited the European Parliament and told MEPs: "What we see is a world-wide silent pandemic. Perhaps as many as one out of six children's brain development have been adversely affected, in part by neurotoxins, as shown by our article in the *Lancet* in November 2006. Testing for neurotoxins is a necessity, in pesticides as well as in other consumer products." (See for a report of this meeting: http://www.wecf.eu/download/2008/08-10-07WECFA_safe_environment7_oct_brussels.pdf)

Almost half of all fruits, vegetables and cereals tested in the EU in 2006 contained detectable pesticide residues, according to a leaked copy of a forthcoming official monitoring report from the European commission, with 4.7% exceeding maximum residue levels (Ends Europe Daily, 17 October 2008). But maximum residue levels have not yet been adapted to the new insights in the effects of low doses on the fetus and young children.

The chemical industry and their advocates have suggested that a large part of agriculture is in danger when hazardous pesticides are taken from the market. But there is no hard proof for such conclusions, and it is estimated that a maximum 5% of currently used substances would be phased out. There are other methods and plant protection products that are already being developed and used. Some of these are highly innovative, and in several cases they have been developed by other industries than the chemical industry. The industry can and will develop more safe innovative products when legislation requires safer products. And according to a recent FAO report, it is even possible to feed the world population with 100% organic agriculture.

But our main argument to you is that the health of our children and public health need to have preference above the short term interests of the pesticides industry. We believe that farmers should be better informed about the health risks of pesticides for them, their workers and their families, certainly now, knowing that even low exposures can be harmful. The taboo to discuss these health risks in farmers' organisations needs to be lifted. It is also in their interest that stringent cut-off criteria for Endocrine Disrupting, Neurotoxic as well as Carcinogenic, Mutagenic and Reprotoxic substances are accepted.

As member of the European Parliament you can play an important role in steering the European agriculture to a safe and sustainable way of food production and reduce and prevent adverse health effects of pesticide use



We express our sincere hope and trust that at the coming vote you will support the following amendments regarding the cut-off criteria, and reject those that would allow the further use of the hazardous chemicals:

- Inclusion of endocrine disruptors: support amendment 193: "suspected to be of toxicological significance in humans including during embryonic/foetal life and/or during childhood, taking due account of likely combination effects".
- Reject identical amendment 227-228-229, which would allow the further use of endocrine disrupting substances.
- Inclusion of Developmental neurotoxic / immunotoxic properties: support amendment 194: "it is not considered to cause a risk of developmental neurotoxic or immunotoxic properties in humans"
- Reject amendment 315, which would allow the further use of neurotoxic and immunotoxic substances.
- Support the inclusion of CMR category 3 (amendment 199), persistent (amendment 201), bioaccumulative (amendment 202) and priority (amendment 207) substances.
- Support amendment 208 on substitution of substances which have "potentially endocrine disrupting, neurotoxic or immunotoxic properties, in adults or during development, established on the basis of assessment and other available data and information including a review of scientific literature"
- Cumulative and synergistic effects: To ensure that cumulative and synergistic effects are taken into consideration, support amendment 55, and amendment 213.

Yours Sincerely,

Marie Kranendonk

Chair Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF)

WECF is a network of 100 women's organisations in 40 countries in the EU and Eastern Europe, with offices in France, Germany and The Netherlands.

We work – with many local partners – on health and environment, varying from building toilets in poor regions to lobbying to ban hazardous chemicals from cosmetics and toys.

