



Kmetijski inštitut Slovenije

Agricultural Institute of Slovenia

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Press Release

Scientists warn of EU legislation: reduced number of pesticides will lead to resistant pests.

Ljubljana, 23 April 2008 *Leading European agricultural experts gathered in Ljubljana (Slovenia) on 22 April 2008 in order to present the Slovenian EU presidency with a declaration on potential risks of the proposed EU legislation. The scientists from seven countries fear that reducing the available range of pesticides could lower their efficiency as it is likely that it will increase resistance.*

The scientist's concern is triggered by proposals announced by EU institutions to reform legislation on plant protection products. The European Parliament voted in favour of new legislation which would drastically reduce the number of authorised pesticides, in the coming years. In the "Declaration of Ljubljana", participating scientists express their fear that such a move would endanger the sustainability of European farming. They conclude that the increased risk of developing resistance to the few remaining substances could make the cultivation of many crops, including grapes, wheat, barley, cotton, fresh fruit, potatoes and vegetables, in Europe problematic, and or uncompetitive. Dramatically increasing food prices are already leading to an increase in the global demand for agricultural resources as well as serious crises in several regions of the world.

The Declaration was agreed on during a workshop hosted by Dr. Andrej Simončič, Director of the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia, and subsequently presented to the Slovenian Agricultural Minister, Iztok Jarc. The scientists' spokesperson, Dr Ian Denholm, Head, Plant and Invertebrate Ecology Division, Rothamsted Research, UK pointed out that , *"In order to safeguard the production of food at affordable prices, it is essential to provide farmers with access to sufficient diversity of crop protection solutions. This is essential to prevent or delay the development of resistant pests, and to maintain the efficacy of remaining crop protection products,"*

European Union legislation has already resulted in a reduction of the available portfolio of pesticides by more than 55% over the last decade. In the opinion of the experts, the policy

makers appear to have overlooked the ever-present threat of pest resistance, which could lead to significantly lower European farm yields and increased food and feed prices.

Lack of diversity leads to resistance

Pest populations have the potential to develop resistance to crop protection products, particularly if they are regularly treated with a single product type. Once pests have developed a resistance to a certain group of crop protection products, their effectiveness is either significantly reduced or lost altogether. In the past, new crop protection products have often solved the problem.

However, it takes an average of ten years and an investment of about 200 million Euros to develop and register a new pesticide. Regulatory targets are already so stringent that the industry is only able to launch about five new active ingredients per year in Europe. The scientists therefore expressed their concern that the innovative capacity of the crop protection industry will not be able to replace the products which are likely to be removed from the market by the proposed legislation, or those which will as a result, be lost to resistance. This would lead to lower crop yields and higher food prices.

From a resistance management point of view, the crop protection products portfolio in Europe has already been very seriously impaired by the ongoing EU re-registration process, under Directive 91/414/EEC. Of the 952 existing crop protection products that existed previously, 530 have already been eliminated – and a further significant reduction in compounds is to be expected.

The current revision process of the Directive 91/414/EEC has been active since the European Commission presented a proposal in 2006. The European Parliament went much further with its proposal in the first reading in October 2007 and added criteria which would contribute to a further loss of between 70%-85% of remaining active substances. The Council of Ministers aims to reach a political agreement in May 2008, taking into consideration the Parliament's proposals.

The scientists who drafted and signed the Declaration of Ljubljana are calling for European politicians to acknowledge the need to retain sufficient product diversity in order to manage the threat of resistance development. It appears that this biological requirement has so far been largely neglected by policy makers. The scientists are concerned that the proposed European legislation will force farmers to use a smaller number of substances more intensively. This would increase the likelihood of resistance developing to the remaining pesticides, thereby threatening agricultural productivity and income of European farmers.

Scientific participation

The following scientists took part in the workshop:

- Dr. Pablo Bielza, Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena (Spain)
- Dr. Ian Denholm, Rothamsted Research (United Kingdom)

- Dr. Udo Heimbach, Julius Kühn Institut (Germany)
- Dr. Philippos Ioannidis, Plant Protection Institute of Thessaloniki (Greece)
- Andy Leadbeater, Fungicide Resistance Action Committee (Switzerland)
- Paul Leonard, Insecticide Resistance Action Committee (Belgium)
- Lise Nistrup Jørgensen, University of Aarhus (Denmark)
- Dr. Guido Sterk, Biobest (Belgium)

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Background information

Agricultural Institute of Slovenia

The Agricultural Institute of Slovenia is a public research institution founded in 1898 and currently operated by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.



The status of a public research institute signifies a governmental non-profit-making body with defined activities which operates in the interests of public service. The Institute performs the following tasks:

- Basic, applied and developmental investigations
- Expert projects defined by legislation
- Consulting, studies and laboratory service
- Supervision and verification of the quality of agricultural products and products used for agriculture
- Publication of the results of research, expert and control work

Its results are published in scientific and specialist periodicals, in reports to contracting partners and in its own publications, issued in series entitled “Raziskave in studije” (Investigations and Studies), “Prikazi in informacije” (Presentations and Information), and “Tehnoloski list” (Technological Leaflet).

The number of persons employed by the Institute is 152, of whom 81 are researchers. The Institute has also a special library with more than 32,000 items which is linked to other libraries in Slovenia and elsewhere. Most of the research and expert work is carried out in modern laboratories as well as in experimental fields and plantations. The main locations are the Experimental Farm for Field, Fodder and Vegetable Crops near Trzin and the Test Station for Apiculture near Golnik. The plant science work is focussed on traditional Slovene products: potatoes, grasses, clovers and vegetables, including several registered varieties owned by the Institute.