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Press Release

Irrevocable impact on EU cropping systems without use of neonicotinoid seed treatments underlined at event hosted by MEP Czeslaw Siekierski

Together with Copa and Cogeca, the Polish Federation of Agricultural Producers FBZPR held an event hosted by MEP Czeslaw Siekierski in Brussels today warning of the devastating impact on EU crop production without the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments.

The event came in view of an upcoming draft proposal which looks to extend the current ban the use of neonicotinoids on crops deemed attractive to bees to all outdoor crops, including non-flowering crops. Participants at the debate looked at the impact of this and how the EU can balance the productivity and competitiveness of European agriculture, with environmental protection.

Speaking at the event, MEP Czeslaw Siekierski said “The first step towards resolving the issue should be to have a deeper dialogue between the different parties in order to achieve best possible results within the current system, i.e. continue to improve the quality of plant protection products in use, better choose the time they are used etc. If the farmers are to achieve it, they must be given certain knowledge. Beekeepers on the other hand must receive different forms of support. Better medicines and bee-friendly plants should also be introduced in ecological focus areas and on uncultivated land. Industry, on the other hand, should increase its research funds and develop more bee-friendly plant protection products and fight with instances of their products being counterfeited. We should be aware that banning the use of official plant protection products will lead to the emergence of a black market, selling products of unreliable quality and far greater harmfulness. Further limitations should, therefore, come along with giving the farmers some alternatives. Only dialogue and mutual understanding can help to build a sustainable agriculture sector.”

Marian Sikora from the Polish Federation of Agricultural Producers FBZPR said “We felt that it was necessary to travel here to Brussels in order to make the Commission aware of the consequences that their decisions have for our sector and for our livelihoods. The EC’s proposal for a near blanket ban on neonicotinoids would make producing crops such as sugar beet, potatoes, cereals as well as fruits and vegetables simply unviable with no evidence of added benefit to the health of bees. We call on the EC to enact policies that balance sustainable agriculture production with environmental protection”.

Max Schulman, Chairman of Copa and Cogeca Cereals Working Party, insisted “A study published by Copa & Cogeca using data from 6 countries shows that due to the ban on neonicotinoid seed treatments, there has been a 10% drop in the oilseeds area since 2013 and a rise in farmers costs and a cut in their incomes as no alternative products exists. Moreover, farmers have to use more spray on their fields to limit the impact of insect attacks. Overall, the increased production costs would force farmers to change their cropping systems. A ban would also contradict the development of precision farming which looks for targeted action at the right time”.

Wrapping up, Graeme Taylor Director of Public Affairs at ECPA warned “The EC’s draft proposal for a near blanket-ban on neonicotinoid will be devastating not just for European Farmers, food security

and the viability of the agriculture sector, but also for the environment and biodiversity, while doing nothing to improve bee health in Europe. Crops certainly need bees, but bees also need crops.”

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