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Environment and Health: Compromise Reached on Pesticides Proposal

Summary: The European Parliament and Council reached a compromise agreement on the controversial pesticides package of legislation during trialogue negotiations in December. The legislation still has to be formally approved by the two institutions. Once adopted, the new legislation will set much stricter requirements on the use of certain active ingredients in pesticides.

Keywords: Environment and Health; Pesticides; Agriculture

The pesticides package (see IEEP overview Note: 24 October 2008), which includes the Proposal for a Regulation on the production and licensing of pesticides (COM(2006)388) and the framework Directive on the sustainable use of pesticides (COM(2006)373), was agreed during a trialogue meeting between representatives from the Council, European Parliament and the Commission on 17 December 2008.

The compromise deal on the proposed Regulation will put in place a system where a positive list of approved active substances in pesticides will be drawn up. Pesticides will then be licensed at the national level based on this list. The deal allows exemptions for banned active ingredients to be used in pesticides for up to five years, if they are proven essential for crop survival. Certain types of banned active ingredients (candidates for substitution) have to be replaced within three years, if safer alternatives exist¹.

The proposed Regulation will divide the EU into three zones (north, centre and south) inside of which mutual recognition of pesticides will become the rule, something which has been previously opposed by the European Parliament as being too arbitrary. However, Member States will still be allowed to ban a product on the basis of specific environmental or agricultural circumstances. This addition is a concession to the European Parliament, which demanded that Member States should be allowed to make national or regional specifications based on nature conservation areas and soil-climate conditions¹.

The compromise deal on the framework Directive requires Member States to adopt National Action Plans with quantitative targets, measures and timetables. The deal prohibits pesticide use, or at least requires it to be kept to a minimum, in specific areas used by the general public or by vulnerable groups¹.

The pesticide package is expected to be adopted by the European Parliament during a second reading vote in Plenary on 12 January². This position will then have to be endorsed by the Council before becoming EU law.

References

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