

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Scientific Report: Benefits and Hazards of Neonicotinoids

**Neonicotinoids** are a group of pesticides harming pollinators. More specifically, neonicotinoids are a class of neuron-active insecticides chemically like nicotine, such as acetamiprid, clothianidin, imidacloprid, nitenpyram, nithiazine, thiacloprid and thiamethoxam. Imidacloprid is the **most widely used insecticide in the world**. They are called neonics. Imidacloprid-containing and thiamethoxam-containing AALs have been developed for the treatment of, e.g. potato planting material, sugar beet seed, spruce, pine, larch, firewood, apple, pear, cherry and plum.

Neonicotinoids **were registered in the EU for plant protection** purposes, since legislative risk assessment concluded that the risks from their use are acceptable. However, scientific evidence was emerging that **neonicotinoids are more hazardous than thought**. Their use has been linked in a range of studies to **adverse ecological effects, including honey-bee colony collapse disorder (CCD) and loss of birds** due to a reduction in insect populations; as well as **current mass extinction of insects** – some countries have lost up to 75% of their insects – some scientists link to neonics.

**In 2013, the European Union** and a few non-EU countries **restricted the use of certain neonicotinoids**, applying the precautionary principle, and intensified research on effects of neonicotinoids on pollinators. However, exemptions from the ban were allowed with special permits that several countries made use of.

**In 2018**, new evidence was available – studies by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) confirmed the **unacceptable risk to bees related to outdoor use** (also use of coated seeds). Therefore, the European Commission elaborated **a proposal for a legal act to ban the three main neonicotinoids** (clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam) **for all outdoor uses**.

In 2018, the European Commission elaborated a proposal for a legal act to ban neonicotinoids for outdoor use. Neonicotinoids are a group of pesticides harming pollinators. The Committee of Member States had to vote for it, and each country needed to arrive with its position. Initially the Lugovian position opposing the ban received heavy criticism from environmental NGOs and some farmers (beekeepers, small scale and organic farmers). To discuss the Lugovian position (support ban or not), the Committee of the Lugovian Parliament on EU Deals calls up for the meeting, and each side has a chance to tell their opinion.

In the previous negotiations, the opposition to ban neonics (traders, farmers) used a lot of false arguments and pseudoscience such as that there were special circumstances in Lugovia, so research in other countries is not right for us. However, since 2013, when discussions on a ban of neonics began, neither the Ministry of Agriculture nor the pesticide dealers themselves had conducted any research to understand how neonics impact bees in Lugovia. There is also no reason to believe that the conditions in Lugovia, compared to neighbouring countries, are that different – we are in the same geographic area, and research in these countries is showing high risks from neonic to bees.

It is also known that **neonicotinoids are important plant protection agents** in case of rape, potato, fruit and vegetable growing as well as in plant breeding. Thus, the ban has a **negative impact on agriculture and food production** with a negative impact on crop yields and quality. The ban could **increase the use of alternative pesticides** with potential negative impacts on the environment. Most of the available alternatives have shorter exposure times, so the treatment should be repeated several times during a season, increasing the risk to the environment. In the EU, active substances are approved for a limited period, and a review of many active substances is now underway, which may also lead to **the withdrawal of certain alternatives to neonicotinoids** from the market. Lack of plant protection agents **increases the use of unregistered agents and the risks of illicit agents**.

