



REDEFINING INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

Key-decision makers and stakeholders were on July 1 brought together by **MEP Pavel Poc**, Chair of the European Parliament Intergroup on “*Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development*” to discuss the importance of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and how it can become a more clear and workable tool across all Member States.

Katrina Sichel, Moderators Europe, welcomed the participants by setting the context of the meeting. It was highlighted that the current definition of IPM, which is found in the Sustainable Use Directive (SUD)¹ is quite general and does not explicitly mention key features of IPM. There are also many other definitions in circulation and it is therefore important to discuss the need for IPM and to redefine it in the context of the problems encountered by the current state of agricultural practices.

Pavel Poc MEP, Chair of the European Parliament Intergroup on “Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development”, opened the meeting by highlighting that the use of pesticides does not only concern the environment but also poses a threat to our human well-being. The corrupted use of pesticides affects our ecosystems, crop yields, food supply and health. Even though there is a definition of IPM it was stressed that the Commission needs to tell Member States and farmers what the voluntary and mandatory measures are to ensure implementation. In order to live in a non-toxic environment we must insist on stringent regulations and put IPM in place. Further, the experience of IPM differs in Member States. Synergies must be created and know-how should be shared beyond national borders. Expertise, education and more public debate were emphasised as essential in order to convince farmers to transition from short-time profit to long-term sustainability.

Patrizia Pitton, DG SANCO, European Commission, stressed that it is too early to redefine IPM as a clear definition already exists in the SUD. The directive also includes a set of general principles that allow the proper implementation and the promotion of crop-specific techniques to be applied directly by farmers. The Commission recognises that there has been a slight delay from Member States in the implementation phase but considers the principles sufficient to allow proper implementation. It was outlined that Member States have the responsibility to establish or support conditions for implementation through tools, information, advisory services and appropriate incentives to better facilitate IPM. Results

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009L0128&from=en>



from the National Action Plans show that the tools and incentives available vary affecting the level of implementation in Member States. The need for expertise and sharing of best practices were further reiterated as essential for implementing IPM. The Commission is currently working on the report compiled from the National Action Plans, which will be sent to the Parliament and Council in the coming months. Further, the Commission outlined that they will continue to follow up on the implementation and are to develop a set of common indicators to measure the level of achievement.

Dr. Jean-Marc Bonmatin, Task Force on Systemic Pesticides, presented the dangers of pesticides, particularly the example of neonicotinoids and the harmful effects they have on biodiversity. Neonicotinoids are used in a large amount of agricultural products all across the world. Its harmful effects have been linked to an increase in bee mortality. The European Red list of Bees calls for the reduction of pesticide use as 9% of bees are threatened with extinction in Europe. Chronic exposure to widely used insecticides does not only kill bees but also affects many other invertebrates, soils, water, and aquatic environments. A study from the European Academies Science Advisory Council was presented, which confirms the impact that neonicotinoids have on biodiversity and that the current practice of prophylactic usage of neonicotinoids is inconsistent with the basic principles of IPM. These insecticides have also effects in cascade on vertebrates (e.g. amphibians, fishes and birds). Further, neonicotinoids may also be found in food residue, which affect human health. It was argued that the present use of systemic insecticides is not sustainable and it is essential that we reduce or suspend its use and implement IPM where chemical pesticides are only used as a last resort (i.e. in 5% of the actual cases). He finally stated that the recent moratorium on 3 neonicotinoids in Europe hasn't led to reduction of yields in crop production.

Lorenzo Furlan, Veneto Agricoltura, joined via Skype and stressed that IPM implementation at large scale for annual crops is just at the beginning; in his opinion there is no need of a redefinition at this stage. Directive 2009/128/CE principles and prescriptions are mostly valid. Currently the immediate implementation of feasible IPM practical solutions appears essential, and already available. He recalled that the information and tools to practically implement IPM do exist. In order to optimize and accelerate IPM implementation, it's important to cover the risks that IPM may imply; this can be done by making specific mutual funds available. Targets are also needed in terms of pesticide reduction, as well as a timeline in order for farmers to properly implement IPM. Integrated production was highlighted as an important tool and if combined with IPM could further reduce the use of pesticides. With regards to arable crops it was emphasised that the prophylactic use of chemicals is still prevailing. The need to move away from this practice was stressed and he



called for the promotion of low cost strategies, and time saving technical tools to enhance implementation.

Marie-Antoinette Micheli, Director of European Affairs, Pollinis, called for a paradigm shift in the agriculture sector. Pollinis, which is a European, independent and non-profit organisation strives to accelerate the transition to sustainable and productive agriculture. Europe has become the largest pesticide user ahead of the US and Asia. It was outlined that farmers have become entirely dependent on the chemical umbrella and are left with no choice to treat their crops preventively regardless of the presence or absence of pests. Further, pests have easily adapted to the conditions of agricultural production and adjusted to the toxic products that are supposed to kill them. It was argued that this has led to an increase in levels of toxicity of pesticides and has put Europe in a never ending cycle of toxins. The damage imposed by pesticides on the environment and public health must be addressed by stringent regulations. It was emphasised that the EU must work towards implementing policies that discourage the use of pesticides to ensure safer and healthier products as well as a more sustainable environment.

Jean-Charles Bocquet, Director-General, European Crop Protection Association, demonstrated that the industry is fully committed to the implementation of IPM and we don't need to redefine it. The improvement of the product profile of pesticides was emphasised by underlining the decrease of the average use rate of pesticides over the years. Pesticides are designed to be more targeted to the pest leading to safer products which respect human health and the environment when used according to label instructions. The industry advocates for research and supports legislation that fosters innovation. However, it was argued that innovation is becoming more costly and more difficult to bring to the market because of the stringent regulations that the industry must deal with. The cost of placing a new product on the market is high, which is putting innovation at risk. This is making the EU less attractive to new investments. It was pointed out that the efforts and achievements made by industry are often not known by many stakeholders and it was emphasised that communication and sharing of information is needed. In order to accelerate the implementation of IPM it was stressed that all stakeholders, despite conflicting views, must work together to ensure that IPM is part of sustainable agriculture.

The second part of the meeting consisted of a panel discussion, which allowed the panellists to react to the various views presented and how their organisations stand on the issue of IPM and pesticide use.

Luc Peeters, Chairman of the Copa-Cogeca Working Party on Phytosanitary Questions, highlighted that the SUD has only been in place since 2014, which is the equivalent of one



season for farmers. It was stressed that more time is needed for farmers to implement what has previously been decided upon. Innovation was highlighted as essential as long as it contributes to the improvement of farming activities as well as the environment. R&D has however for the past decade shown too much inventory and too little extension to farmers not taking into account farmers needs. The same was said for EU legislation, which is sometimes counter-reactive for farmers. Further, the stick approach was discouraged as it is more efficient to reward those that are performing well, which will encourage others to follow.

Henriette Christensen, Policy Adviser, PAN Europe, stressed that she agreed with previous speakers that there is no need to redefine IPM but instead focus on implementation. The Commission must be stronger on enforcing the mandatory approaches of IPM. It was also stressed that farmers must be more present in the field and should only spray when necessary. Farmers need to start thinking long-term and recognising pesticide use as a last resort in order to convert the system. It was mentioned that the Common Agricultural Policy states that Member States must from 2015 inform all farmers of IPM and what it entails. It was argued that this shows that IPM is moving forward but it will take time and collaboration among all stakeholders.

Dr. Willem J. Ravensberg, President, International Biocontrol Manufacturers Association, highlighted that IPM is still being used on a small-scale and in order to increase its usage farmers need tools. Innovation has immense potential to replace more and more pesticides but the process of getting them onto the market is too slow. It was highlighted that the Commission must focus on assessing low-risk pesticides by establishing criteria as well as a clear definition. This would automatically replace high-risk pesticides with better and safer products. However, it is essential that farmers are provided with incentives to choose better products and adopt IPM on a wider scale.

Dr. Piet Boonekamp, International Organisation for Biological Control, agreed with the previous speakers that IPM does not need to be redefined. Prevention was stressed as the most interesting element of IPM as it was pointed out as the measure that will reduce our reliance on pesticides. More research is also an important element as tools are still missing, particularly for arable crops. He stated that it's not very logical to discuss the principles of prophylactics within the IPM definition on the issue of neonicotinoides. The EASAC report came to the conclusion that neonicotinoides are not the main cause of winter death of bees, but maybe for other pollinators, although not enough data are available. However, he added that prophylactics should not be removed from the IPM definition, as they are a key element of prevention, in achieving IPM.



The discussion with the audience highlighted that acceleration in the implementation of IPM is needed. It was called upon the EU to adopt a more holistic approach. IPM is a broad topic, which must involve all stakeholders and engagement is needed from various DGs in the discussion. The need for improving the registration process was further reiterated. However, it was pointed out that it is the responsibility of Member States to deal with this matter. With regards to criteria of low-risk pesticides there is currently an ongoing discussion to simplify the process. The importance of precision farming was further highlighted as well as the need for involving farmers and farmer associations in research and providing extension services. It is also vital to get a handle on how many farmers are working with IPM to be able to benchmark what the farmers are doing. The risks of pesticides on ecosystems, biodiversity, and health were further discussed.

Pavel Poc MEP concluded by emphasising that the responsibility of implementing EU legislation rests with the Member States. They must engage with farmers and provide training as well as exchange knowledge and information. The involvement of all stakeholders is essential to inform policy-makers. More pressure must be put on the national level to ensure implementation and how to move this debate to the national level.