

Syngenta is at the heart of the UK regulatory agencies

On June 1st, 2012 the French Agriculture Minister banned the pesticide Cruiser® (Syngenta's thiamethoxam) and the ban will take place in a few weeks. They took the new study from France by Henry *et al.* seriously: '*Non-lethal exposure of honey bees to thiamethoxam (neonicotinoid systemic pesticide) causes high mortality due to homing failure at levels that could put a colony at risk of collapse. Simulated exposure events on free-ranging foragers labeled with an RFID tag suggest that homing is impaired by thiamethoxam intoxication. These experiments offer new insights into the consequences of common neonicotinoid pesticides used.*'

The Scientific Opinion from the EFSA dismissed the study. They didn't think that the bees were fed "*field realistic doses*" and "*it would be necessary to repeat the studies with other exposure levels. Additional data would also be required to fully consider the relevance of the new research...*"

However, the two documents published by the EFSA (18th April and 1st June) on Plant Protection Products and Bees cannot be called 'Scientific Opinion'. They are a cynical parody of science. As an organisation that is supposed to be protecting people and the environment in Europe, **the EFSA cannot be taken seriously when it has no knowledge of the baseline levels of neonicotinoids in soil, surface and ground-water.** They are using delaying tactics to protect the industry and keep the neonicotinoids on the market, just as the US EPA/SETAC Workshop was in January 2011. In fact, the recommendations for further research are very similar to those identified in the SETAC Summary Report (See Complaints about the EFSA).

THIAMETHOXAM USAGE IN THE UK

Between 2009 and 2010, thiamethoxam usage went up more than ten times.

Year	Region	Crop Group	Active Substance	Total Area Treated (ha)¹	Total Weight Applied (kg)
2010	Great Britain	All Crops	Thiamethoxam	298,007	9,105
2009	Great Britain	All Crops	Thiamethoxam	22,567	938
2008	Great Britain	All Crops	Thiamethoxam	21,909	940
2007	Great Britain	All Crops	Thiamethoxam	1,333	5.6
2006	Great Britain	All Crops	Thiamethoxam	1,213	5.4
2005	Great Britain	All Crops	Thiamethoxam	1,213	5.4

According to Defra, the industry pays 60% of the Chemical Regulation Directorate's budget, so Defra and the Defra Minister are unlikely to ban thiamethoxam.

A secret application by Defra and Syngenta for a GM herbicide-tolerant crop.

On the EFSA website, we discovered that: *"The UK Competent Authority and Syngenta had applied for placing on the market of a GM, herbicide tolerant (glyphosate) maize GA21 for food and feed uses, import, processing and cultivation."* It was adopted by the EFSA on 16 December 2011. Although the EFSA had said that there were no effects of human or animal health or the environment, in the body of the document, they suddenly admitted to the problems of reduction in farmland biodiversity, selection of weed communities and selection of glyphosate resistant weeds and destruction of food webs and the ecological functions they provide. Nevertheless, the EFSA approved it, but covered itself by saying *"The magnitude of these potential adverse environmental effects will depend on a series of factors including the specific herbicide and cultivation management applied at farm level, the crop rotation...etc.* and recommends *"case-specific monitoring"*. How stupid can Defra be? Instead of listening to Syngenta, why did they not speak to the farmers in the US and Canada?

Glyphosate-resistant (GR) weeds

GM herbicide tolerant crops were introduced in 1996. The first GR weed population confirmed in the U.S. in 1998 was rigid ryegrass, infesting several thousand acres in California almond orchards. Less than a decade later, GR biotypes of nine species are now found in the U.S. and infest millions of acres of cropland in at least 22 states. Particularly troublesome are Pigweed, Horseweed and Giant Ragweed whose infestations can sometimes cause cropland to be abandoned. Each year more pesticides, or different or older ones, including paraquat, have to be applied. In 2005, the US EPA evaluated for re-registration 2,4-D, an old herbicide and a component of Agent Orange. The US EPA determined that 2,4-D was eligible for re-registration but required certain changes to uses on the label to mitigate risk. Weed scientists say that US farmers are locked in a *'pesticide treadmill.'* *"The economic picture dramatically darkens for farmers combating resistant weeds under average soybean yields (36 bushels) and market prices (\$6.50 per bushel). Such average conditions would generate about \$234 in gross income per acre. The estimated \$80 increase in 2010 costs per acre of HT soybeans would then account for one-third of gross income per acre, and total cash operating costs would exceed \$200 per acre, leaving just \$34 to cover land, labor, management, debt, and all other fixed costs. Such a scenario leaves little or no room for profit at the farm level."*

Syngenta pays for power

In 2009 Dr Peter Campbell of Syngenta gave £1 million to fund Warwick University and Rothamsted Research *"to help to improve honeybee health"*. Syngenta pioneered Operation Bumblebee in the UK and in 2010 announced expansion of programmes across Europe; up to €1 million over 5 years. Programmes included *"What Operation Bumblebee can do for your golf course"* in conjunction with STRI, a leading Sports Turf Consultancy that runs training courses for turf managers for golf, football, rugby, cricket etc. Their armamentarium of treatments includes MeritTurf (*imidacloprid*, Bayer). About 60% of the Chemical Regulation Directorate budget is paid for by the agrochemical industry.

Pollinator Initiative

In 2010, a £10 million Insect Pollinator Initiative was announced, part-funded by the Wellcome Trust, in order to find out the cause of steep declines in honeybees, bumblebees and hoverflies. The peer review panel membership included Dr Peter Campbell (Syngenta) David Aston, a BBKA Executive Member and neonicotinoid denier. This accounts for why there was not a single project on systemic neonicotinoid insecticides.

Healthy Bees Plan Project Management Board and SEAG

Meetings started on 23/07/2009. In nearly three years these two Defra/Fera Committees never mentioned neonicotinoid pesticides as a possible cause of bee declines, only the *Varroa* mite.

The EU Directive (2009/128/EC) on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides: The UK Consultation and Government Decisions, published December 2010

The government voted every time on the side of industry.

Article 10 concerns Protection of Water Courses from pesticide pollution, including establishing buffer zones to protect aquatic environments, surface and ground water. The government rejected the EU Directive Advice. Instead it said that it would “*primarily seek to work with the pesticides industry*” to enhance voluntary measures.

It also rejected EU Directive advice to ban aerial spraying: “*We do not consider that the responsible application of pesticides by aerial spraying poses an unacceptable risk to human health or the environment and, consequently, we will use the derogation.*”

Article 11 Use of pesticides in specific sensitive areas: “*We do not consider it necessary to prohibit the use of pesticides in public spaces or conservation areas or to impose new statutory controls on pesticide use in these areas.*”

The UK National Ecosystem Assessment

This was published by Defra in June 2011. Page 8 of the Synthesis was entitled: Changes in the past 60 years. Defra managed to rewrite the whole post-war history of the destruction of the countryside by industrial farming, without any mention of pesticides or herbicides.

Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food (COT)

This is described as an independent scientific committee, appointed by Ministers. Members are asked to state conflicts of interest. There are three members from the industry who work for Syngenta (AstraZeneca is Syngenta’s parent company) yet none of them declared any conflicts of interest.

The Agrochemical Industry has forged partnerships everywhere

On World Environment Day June 2012, on the back of a supplement by Media Planet in The Independent is an article entitled “*Sustainability and innovation go hand in hand*”

It is an interview with Dr Wolfgang Plischke, Member of the Board of Management of Bayer AG about sustainability and partnerships.

Question: Professor Plischke, how important is sustainability to Bayer?

“*I believe that sustainability goes hand in hand with future viability.*”

Question: How important are these partnerships to Bayer?

“*We work with a broad range of partners and non-governmental organisations worldwide*” (including WHO and UNEP). “*We also cooperate with research institutes and universities, other companies and private and public institutions.*”

Question: Does this commitment pay dividends...?

“*The name Bayer has a good reputation in the market for socially responsible investments*”

An advertisement in 2011 for a career in Bayer: ***At Bayer, we’ll give you a chance to make a difference by joining a team that is dedicated to changing the world with great care***

06/06/2012