

Europe bans Bayer's thiacloprid insecticide

Safety and environmental concerns behind decision

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Credit: Bayer

Bayer maintains that thiacloprid, a neonicotinoid that is suspected to harm pollinators, can be used safely.

The European Commission has again moved against neonicotinoid insecticides by choosing not to renew a European license for Bayer's thiacloprid because of health and environmental concerns. It is the fourth neonicotinoid excluded in Europe.

Neonicotinoids, a class of systemic insecticides developed by Bayer and others in the 1990s, are used on food crops globally. The insecticides first gained approval in the European Union in 2004. Some scientists point to neonicotinoids as a cause of declining bee populations.

"The scientific advice from EFSA [the European Food Safety Authority] is clear: there are environmental concerns related to the use of this pesticide, particularly its impact on groundwater, but also related to human health, in reproductive toxicity," Stella Kyriakides, European commissioner for health and food safety, **says in a statement.**

Bayer says that it respects the EC's decision but that it believes thiacloprid-based products "can be used safely." The company also says it will continue to sell thiacloprid in other regions of the world. "Sixteen European member states confirmed that without thiacloprid, insufficient chemical alternatives remain available for numerous crop-pest combinations," Bayer says.

Some experts also say that alternatives are lacking. "Despite studies showing that neonicotinoids can pose acute risks to bees and other pollinators, there is still a real requirement for effective substitutes in a number of crop-pest combinations," says Robert Harwood, managing director of the agriculture consulting firm CPL Business Consultants.