

## Keynotes

**Ganzelmeier, H.**

Federal Biological Research Centre for Agriculture and Forestry, Messeweg 11/12, 38104 Braunschweig, Germany

### **Thematic strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides: an action plan to improve good plant protection practices throughout Europe**

#### **1. Introduction**

Like already mentioned the colleagues from the European Commission are unable to come and presenting the keynote on Thematic Strategy on the sustainable Use of Pesticide.

Because of the great importance of the TS for the inspection of sprayers in Europe, we decided to keep this topic on the agenda.

Now, I will present the power point slides provided by the commission. You will receive a sheet of paper to note your questions. We will gather your sheets and forward these questions to the commission to be answered.

The presentation addresses the following issues:

- Why a Thematic Strategy on the sustainable Use of Pesticide?
- How was the Thematic Strategy built?
- What are the measures proposed by the Commission?
- Where are we in the adoption process?

#### **2. Why a Thematic Strategy on the sustainable Use of Pesticide?**

Pesticides are active substances and products that have the inherent potential to kill or control harmful or unwanted organisms- such as pests and weeds. They can be used in agriculture or to control the growth of plants on non-agricultural surfaces. The use of pesticides brings various benefits –mostly economic-in particular for farmers.

However, because of their specific (intrinsic) properties, pesticides can be harmful to non-target organisms and can have unwanted adverse effects on human health and the environments. All pesticides need to be evaluated and authorised before they can be placed on the market according the Directive 91/414/EC. The placing of biocidal products on the market followed the Directive 98/8/EC. Despite the existing regulatory restrictions, the actual consumption and use of pesticides in the EU has not decreased over the last ten years. In addition, certain pesticides are commonly found in the aquatic environment at concentrations well above the regulatory limits.

Furthermore, existing legislation on plant protection products focuses on the placing on the market and on the end of the life-cycle of such products, but hardly addresses the actual use-phase. In order to correct this deficiency and create an overall coherent well consistent policy framework for pesticides, the Strategy focuses on the use-phase.

A number of other pieces of EU legislation also affect the use of pesticide. In particular

- the Water Framework Directive
- the Maximum residue levels of pesticides (Regulation EC 396/2005)
- the Waste-Framework Directive and
- the Directive on hazardous Waste

For the time being, the TS only deals with plant protection products. Biocides will be considered at a later stage.

### 3. Current legal framework

In adopting the 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme (6<sup>th</sup> EAP), the European Parliament and the Council recognised that the impact of pesticides on human health and the environment in particular from plant protection products, must be further reduced (Decision No 1600/2002/EC). They underlined the need to achieve a more sustainable use of pesticides as well as a significant overall reduction in risk and of the use of pesticides consistent with the necessary crop protection.

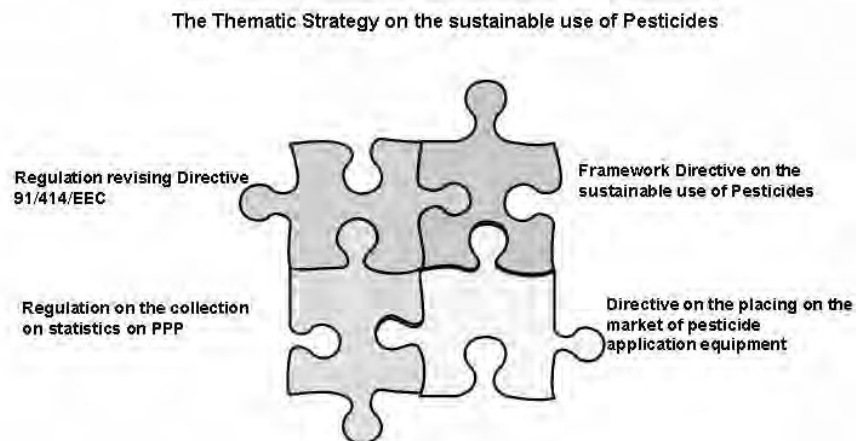
The EP and the Council call for the development of a Thematic Strategy on the sustainable Use of Pesticides.

### 4. How the Thematic Strategy was built?

The Commission consulted the general public and all stakeholders and institutions on this communication, including the European Parliament, the Council, .... Overall, there was a lot of support from all, although institutions and some stakeholders did differ on the details, e.g. on whether a measure should be implemented at Community level or Member State level, or whether it should be legally binding or voluntary. The most controversial issues were aerial spraying, quantitative use reduction targets, and taxation. The Commission was then invited to assess the economic, social and environmental impacts of the future Strategy proposal. A study was carried out by an independent consultant, BIPRO outlined several options for potential measures. BIPRO delivered a report which was based on a survey of competent authorities and stakeholders. Numerous conferences were organised. In addition, the Commission launched an open internet consultation from March to May 2005, which gave rise to almost 1800 responses. The Commission used all these contributions to develop the proposal for the Thematic Strategy on sustainable Use of Pesticides. The TS contain measures which are destined to be integrated into existing legislation. Only when this is not possible is it necessary to propose new legislation or other appropriate instruments.

The European Commission adopted the Strategy in July 2006.

- It is accompanied by a proposal for a framework Directive on the sustainable use of pesticides (adopted in July 2006)
- In parallel to the Strategy a regulation revising the Directive 91/414 has been adopted (July 2006)
- In December 2006 the European Commission adopted a proposal for a regulation on the collection of statistics on plant protection products.
- Another new proposal due to be adopted by 2008 will complete the Strategy:  
It will lay down essential environmental protection requirements for the placing on the market of new pesticide application equipment and accessories, possibly within the Framework of Directive 2006/42/EC.



**Figure 1** Linkage of European Regulations, Framework Directives and Directives

These regulations, Framework Directive and Directive are linked as the figure 1 shows.

## 5. What are the measures proposed by the Commission?

Inspection of equipment in use: Well maintained application equipment is essential for reducing the adverse impacts of pesticides on health and the environment, and to guarantee the most efficient and economic use of pesticides. Application equipment must be regulatory inspected and maintained. The organisational aspects (e.g. public or private inspection systems, quality control of inspection bodies, financing, fees to be paid by owners, etc.) will remain at the competence (discretion) of the MS, who will have to report to the Commission. Exchange of best practices should be developed in the framework of the Thematic Strategy Expert Group, made up of representatives of the MS and of stakeholders.

Certification of new application equipment: Pesticide application equipment for professional use has to be placed on the market and put into service only if it does not endanger the health or safety of persons or the environment, when properly installed and maintained and used for its intended purpose. Essential health and safety requirements already set out in Directive 2006/42/EC on Machinery. Essential environmental requirements have to be laid down. New Directive to be proposed by 2008 (possibly through amending Machinery Directive)

### Other measures

National Action Plans: The Strategy contains a proposal for a Framework Directive which will be obliged Member States to set up National Action Plans (NAPs) to reduce hazards, risks and dependence on pesticides. In several countries, such national plans have been very successful.

Training: Users must be fully aware (in particular professional users) of the risk linked to the use of pesticides. MS should therefore ensure that professional users, distributors and advisers have access to the minimum training required. Requirements regarding the training and official recognition of training (certifications or licensing) should be established. The general public should be better informed, information passed on through retailers and distributors, and other appropriate measures.

Aerial spraying: Aerial spraying can cause significant damage to health and the environment, in particular from spray drift. It should therefore be strictly regulated and used only where it represents clear environmental advantages compared to other spraying methods or where there are no viable alternatives. The draft Directive therefore requires MS to ban aerial spraying. It allows derogations for crops and areas where aerial spraying can have advantages or bring environmental or health benefits, or where there are no viable alternatives. MS will have to report these derogations, which will be discussed in the Thematic Strategy Expert Group in order to define guidelines and criteria.

Protection of the aquatic environment: Specific measures to protect surface water and ground water are required to reduce the impact of pesticides on the aquatic environment. The draft Directive will require MS to establish pollution reduction programmes which must include measures such as buffer strips (buffer zones) or the use of particular technical equipment to reduce spray drift.

Prohibition or restriction of plant protection products use in sensitive areas: Member States will have to strongly reduce or ban the use of pesticides in the specific safeguard zones.

Storage and handing of plant protection products: Unused, past-expiry or banned pesticides and empty packaging have to be collected in a controlled way. Obsolete pesticides have to be treated in accordance with the rules for hazardous waste. Cleaned packaging which has been rinsed three times is considered non-hazardous in most MS. It should be treated for possible re-use and ultimately destroyed in a controlled way. When spraying equipment is cleaned, the residue must be disposed of in an environmentally-sound way.

Promotion of low pesticide input farming: Pesticides should be used only when there are no other ways or controlling and limiting the damage caused by pests. More encouragement should be given to pest control techniques that allow little or no use of pesticides. Support is already provided to farmers who convert to certified Integrated Control, Organic Farming or other schemes with the objective of reducing pesticide application. The Draft Directive requires MS to promote implementation of IPM principles.

Risk indicators: Common and harmonized indicators are important for measuring risk reduction trends within and among the MS. Up to now, there has been no agreement on indicators. The OECD is developing harmonized risk indicators for water and soil. This project ends in spring 2007.

### **Where are we in the adoption process?**

The Thematic Strategy, and in particular the draft Framework Directive, is now going through the EU decision making process. Presently the decisions on the proposal for the Framework Directive on the sustainable use of pesticides taking place in the Agriculture Council (AGRI). The discussion on the Thematic Strategy and the legislative proposal is still continuing in the Environment (ENVI) and Agriculture (AGRI) Committees of the Parliament. The first reading agreement is not yet known.

### **References**

EC, 2007: Policy for a sustainable use of pesticides – The story behind the Strategy. ISBN 92-79-03221-6