

MEPs Approve Pesticides Legislation

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The European Parliament has overwhelmingly approved new EU pesticides legislation which will ban the use of certain dangerous chemicals on 13 January 2009. Measures to ensure the safer use of pesticides in daily life will also be introduced.

Pesticide manufacturers, farmers and growers had voiced strong objections to the adoption of the legislation because of fears over the number of pesticide ingredients to be withdrawn from the market.

A positive list of approved ingredients for pesticides is to be drawn up at EU level. Pesticides will then be licensed at national level on the basis of this list. Certain highly toxic chemicals will be banned unless exposure to them would in practice be negligible.

However pesticides which can be placed on the market under current legislation will remain available until their existing authorisation expires.

Under the new legislation member states must adopt National Action Plans for reducing the risks and impacts of pesticide use on human health and the environment, including timetables and targets for use reduction.

Further measures to be introduced include the banning of aerial crop spraying and spraying close to residential areas, the introduction of no-spray zones around water sources and the required reduction of pesticide use in public parks and gardens.

The legislation must now be endorsed by the Council but it is expected that this should be a formality. Member states must implement the directive by early 2011.

This announcement comes just a week after the Pesticides (Maximum Residue Levels) Regulations (NI) 2008 came into force. These Regulations enforce the provisions of European Parliament and Council Regulation 396/2005 EC on maximum residue levels of pesticides in or on food and feed of plant and animal origin.

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