



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

From George Eustice MP
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Caroline Lucas MP
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Your ref: ML.N0088.CM.3.7.17
Our ref: MC2017/01150/CC

14 August 2017

Dear Caroline

Thank you for your letter of 3 July to the Secretary of State about the regulation of neonicotinoids. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

When considering the regulation of any pesticide, the government's highest priority is always the protection of people and the environment. Decisions on the use of pesticides should be based on a careful scientific assessment of the risks; pesticides that carry unacceptable risks will not be authorised. There are currently EU-wide restrictions on using three neonicotinoids on a range of mostly flowering crops, including oilseed rape and spring cereals. The Government keeps the developing evidence on neonicotinoids under review, advised by the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides. On the basis of current available evidence, we support these existing restrictions.

The European Commission has proposed tightening the current rules on three neonicotinoids so use would only be permitted on plants that stay within a permanent greenhouse for their entire life and are not replanted outside. This proposal follows a review by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) of some data on neonicotinoids. EFSA's review is still in progress and is due to be completed towards the end of the year.

The government is now assessing the scientific evidence and will respond taking full account of the importance of protecting pollinators. The Secretary of State has made it clear that the government will not dilute its high environmental standards on leaving the EU; indeed we will enhance environmental protection. Neonicotinoids and other pesticides will continue to be restricted wherever the scientific evidence indicates that restrictions are necessary to protect the environment.

The government continues to believe that measures to protect bees and other pollinating insects are important. Defra published independent research in 2014 that looked at the status and value of pollinators and pollination services. This understanding of the many environmental pressures that can affect pollinators underpins our National Pollinator Strategy. The Strategy is a statement of collaborative action and cooperation between government and other organisations to protect the future of pollinators.

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