

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

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7 January 1981

DOCUMENT 1-729/80

REPORT

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on the Environment,  
Public Health and Consumer Protection

on the proposals from the Commission of the European  
Communities to the Council (Doc. 1-806/79) for

- I. a Directive on the fixing of maximum levels for  
pesticide residues in and on cereals intended  
for human consumption
- II. a Directive on the fixing of maximum levels for  
pesticide residues in and on foodstuffs of animal  
origin

Rapporteur: Mr F. COMBE

By letter of 14 February 1980, the President of the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament to deliver an opinion on the proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for

- I. a Directive on the fixing of maximum levels for pesticide residues in and on cereals intended for human consumption
- II. a Directive on the fixing of maximum levels for pesticide residues in and on foodstuffs of animal origin.

The President of the European Parliament referred these proposals to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection as the committee responsible and to the and to the Committee on Agriculture for an opinion.

On 21 March 1980 the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection appointed Mr Combe rapporteur.

It considered these proposals at its meetings of 21 October, 27 November and 5 December 1980 and unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement at the last of these meetings.

Present: Mr Collins, chairman; Mr Johnson, vice-chairman; Mr Combe, rapporteur; Mr Ceravolo (deputizing for Mr Segre), Mr Colla (deputizing for Mr Muntingh), Mr Forth (deputizing for Sir Peter Vanneck), Mrs Fullet, Mr Ghergo, Mrs Krouwel-Vlam, Mrs Maij-Weggen, Mr Mertens, Mrs Schleicher, Mrs Scrivener, Mrs Seibel-Emmerling, Mr Sherlock, Mrs Spaak, Mrs Squarcialupi and Mr Verroken.

The opinion of the Committee on Agriculture is attached.

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The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on the proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for

- I. a Directive on the fixing of maximum levels for pesticide residues in and on cereals intended for human consumption
- II. a Directive on the fixing of maximum levels for pesticide residues in and on foodstuffs of animal origin

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council<sup>1</sup>,
  - having been consulted by the Council pursuant to Article 43 of the EEC Treaty (Doc. 1-806/79),
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection and the opinion of the Committee on Agriculture (Doc. 1-729/80);
1. Welcomes these proposals, whose aim, in implementation of the Council's declarations of intent of 22 July 1974<sup>2</sup>, is to provide better protection of consumers' health;
  2. Notes with satisfaction that the Commission has chosen total harmonization, which is more effective in protecting the environment and the health of consumers while doing more to promote trade;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ No. C 56, 6.3.1980, p. 14

<sup>2</sup> OJ No. C 92, 6.8.1974, p. 2

3. Stresses once again the need to rank consumer health protection higher than economic considerations;
4. Believes that harmonization of legislation on foodstuffs is essential to the proper functioning of the common market in agricultural products;
5. Considers that Article 43 of the EEC Treaty provides the best basis for dealing with health problems of this kind;
6. Considers it most important that the necessary inspection procedures be instituted and calls on the Commission to ensure that imported cereals and foodstuffs of animal origin are subject to the same strict controls as regards maximum levels of residues as apply to intra-Community trade;
7. Invites the Commission, therefore, to submit without delay, via the usual procedures, Community-level sampling and analysis methods as required for the implementation of this directive;
8. Wishes nevertheless to restrict as far as possible the scope for permitting higher maximum levels for the residues of certain pesticides in certain cases;
9. Expresses its concern at the fact that the directive does not deal with the problems caused by the accumulation and possible interaction of several different pesticide residues which may be present at the same time in the same product, even though in each case the level may be within the maximum permitted limits and consequently requests that the Standing Committee on Plant Health investigate this subject as a matter of urgency and that the Commission take appropriate action to provide the greatest possible safeguards for consumers' health;
10. Requests the Commission in conjunction with the appropriate experts to adapt and supplement the existing regulations in the light of any new scientific and technological discoveries;
11. Requests the Commission to take immediate steps to ban the use of the pesticides ethylene dibromide and ethylene dichloride;
12. Requests the Commission, taking the above into account, also to incorporate the following amendments in its proposal, pursuant to Article 149, second paragraph, of the EEC Treaty.

Proposal for a Council Directive on the fixing of maximum levels  
for pesticide residues in and on cereals intended for human  
consumption

Introduction unchanged

Recitals

Recitals

.....

Whereas it is not necessary to delete  
apply the provisions of this  
Directive to products intended  
for export to non-member  
countries;

.....

Articles 1 to 8 unchanged

Article 9

Article 9

This Directive shall not apply delete  
to the products referred to in  
Article 1 where it can be  
established by appropriate  
evidence that they are intended  
for export to non-member countries.

Articles 10 and 11 unchanged

Annexes I and II unchanged

<sup>1</sup> For complete text see OJ No. C 56, 6.3.1980, p. 14

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Proposal for a Council Directive on the fixing of maximum levels  
for pesticide residues in and on foodstuffs of animal origin

Introduction unchanged

Recitals

Recitals

.....

Whereas it is not necessary to  
apply this Directive to products  
for export to non-member countries

delete

.....

Articles 1 to 8 unchanged

Article 9

Article 9

This Directive shall not apply  
to the foodstuffs referred to in  
Article 1 where it can be estab-  
lished by appropriate evidence  
that they are intended for export  
to non-member countries;

delete

Articles 10, 11 and 12 unchanged

Annexes I and II unchanged

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. These proposals extend the existing rules on pesticide residues in and on fruit, by setting tolerance levels for residues of pesticides
  - (a) used for treating cereals,
  - (b) on and in foodstuffs of animal origin.
2. The two proposals were announced in the Council's resolution of 22 July 1974, according to which they should have already been adopted.
3. The Commission is proposing total harmonization.

GENERAL COMMENTS

4. It would be idle to stress the importance of measures for the protection of human health which implies the absence of dangerous substances in the cereals and foodstuffs of animal origin which we eat.
5. The use of pesticides is vital to modern agriculture, and they enable agricultural productivity to be substantially increased. However, many pesticides in use and their metabolites or breakdown products may, because of their persistence and above all because of their toxicity, be absorbed by the human body through foodstuffs with adverse secondary effects on health.
6. There is therefore a need to safeguard the consumer against the risk presented by these residues, by approximating and harmonizing existing national provisions in the various Member States, in order to remove barriers to the free movement of goods.
7. These Community provisions should play a major role in safeguarding consumer health, by adopting national limits on residues fixed according to strict toxicological criteria.



INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS ON THE FIRST PROPOSAL

8.1. Article 9 (p.7) seems ill-advised. It is clear that maximum limits on pesticide residues are just as necessary for consumers outside the Community as for those within it. This thoughtless provision should be deleted.

8.2. Annex II, Part B, (page 10): major toxicological research is in progress on all these compounds.

It appears that 1,2 Dibromoethane and 1,2 Dichloroethane are to be regarded as potential human carcinogens. It therefore seems premature to set levels, however low, for substances whose human toxicity cannot be ruled out.

The committee is therefore of the opinion that the use of these pesticides must be prohibited.

9. On the matter of pesticide residues in general, it is worth mentioning that those encountered in consignments of cereals are the residues of insecticides used during storage and transport. Residues of pesticides used during growing are practically never found.

10. In normal circumstances, this is explained by the short life of the products authorized during growing and the considerable interval between the last effective application to the standing cereals and harvesting.

11. However, the letter of the law says that a batch of grain, in order to be reckoned sound, genuine and marketable must be free of live insects and mites, and this frequently leads to the excessive use of insecticides for stored grain. To make sure that not a single weevil survives in a train or barge, large doses are used, with 'booster' doses each time the goods are moved. This should be stopped.

INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS ON THE SECOND PROPOSAL

12.1. Article 7 calls for the following comment: Pesticide residue contamination of foodstuffs of animal origin stems from a wide variety of sources; from feed in general (fodder, meal, of vegetable and animal origin), from the environment, or from health precautions (specifics against parasites). The Standing Committee should invite the chairman or secretary of the Standing Veterinary Committee to attend its working meetings when it is dealing with the problems referred to in Article 7 (1).

12.2. The comment made on Article 9 of the cereals directive applies equally to this directive.

CONCLUSION

13. With these reservations the committee recommends approval of the two proposed directives.

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Letter from Sir Henry PLUMB, chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, to Mr COLLINS, chairman of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

Brussels, 24 April 1980

Dear Mr Collins,

At its meeting of 22-24 April 1980 the Committee on Agriculture<sup>1</sup> considered the proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a directive fixing maximum levels for pesticide residues in and on cereals intended for human consumption and for a directive fixing maximum levels for pesticide residues in and on foodstuffs of animal origin (COM(80) 14 final - Doc. 1-806/79).

The aim of these proposals is to lay down maximum levels for residues of the most harmful and persistent pesticides with regard to cereals intended for human consumption and to foodstuffs of animal origin. The importance of these measures lies in the harmful effects on human health of the failure to fix a maximum level for such residues, as the pesticides in question, without which modern agriculture cannot maintain a satisfactory level of production, reappear in the food chains either via cereals or via animal feedingstuffs.

These measures supplement previous directives adopted by the Council prohibiting the marketing and use of highly dangerous and harmful substances in pesticides. It is evident that a Community approach to this problem, aimed primarily at protecting health and limiting harmful consequences for the environment, is necessary also in order to ensure against any barriers to trade arising from disparities in the maximum quantities fixed for pesticide residues.

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<sup>1</sup> Present: Mr Früh, vice-chairman and acting chairman; Mr Abens, (deputizing for Mr Gautier), Mrs Barbarella, Mr Bocklet, Mr Colleselli, Mr de Courcy Ling (deputizing for Mr Curry), Mr Dalsass, Mr Delatte, Mr Helms, Mr Maher, Mrs Martin (deputizing for Mr Caillavet), Mr Newton Dunn (deputizing for Mr Howell), Mr Brøndlund Nielson, Mr d'Ormesson, Mr Papapietro, Mr Provan, Miss Quin and Mr Vernimmen.

The Committee on Agriculture feels that it is superfluous to emphasize the importance of measures designed to protect the health of human beings and animal and plant life and can therefore approve the proposed measures. It would however draw attention to the need for effective monitoring of maximum pesticide residue levels, the need for strict standards governing imports of and trade in cereals and foodstuffs of animal origin and also the vital necessity for there to be active and continuing cooperation between the Commission and experts in this field so that the standards in force can be amended and added to promptly as and when scientific research produces new findings.

(sgd) Sir Henry PLUMB