



PRESS RELEASE

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Thiacloprid honey: European beekeepers against rising Maximum Residues Limits

On March 1, the EFSA issued a positive opinion on the change of the Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) in honey of thiacloprid, a neonicotinoid still authorized in the EU. This MRL increase from 0.05 mg/kg to 0.2 mg/kg. This administrative change is very problematic on the one hand, for the health of our fellow European citizens but also for bees and the beekeeping sector.

According to Regulation (EC) No. 396/2005, the Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) is *"The maximum concentration of a pesticide residue in or on foodstuffs (...) to protect all vulnerable consumers"*. According to Germany, the country in charge of the dossier, the level of residue found in honey from oilseed rape treated with thiacloprid exceeds the standard (0.05 mg/kg). Consequently, Germany proposes to the European Community, under cover of an EFSA opinion, to increase the MRL up to 0.2 mg/kg.

Yet the latest ANSES report¹, French Food Safety Agency, concluded on thiacloprid: *"It is noteworthy that thiacloprid was recently subject of a classification proposal as carcinogenic category 2 and toxic to reproduction category 1b by the ECHA². This classification leads, pending the adoption of criteria at European level, to consider the substance as having endocrine disrupting effects. »*

From an administrative point of view, there is a no-effect dose for carcinogens, reproductive toxins and endocrine disruptors, but from a scientific point of view, this is not the case!

EFSA considers that according to European patterns of consumption, German children would be the most exposed by this change, consuming 33% of the Acceptable Daily Intake of thiacloprid. But EFSA fails to mention that German children are not exposed only to thiacloprid, but to a mixture of pesticides: what effect this cocktail may have on German children and the rest of the European population? Such results should alarm our institutions instead of driving them to dismiss the problem.

Moreover, the MRLs do not apply to bees, the first users of the food chain, true bio-indicators of the health of our environment. For these insects, for which honey is the main energy source, these concentrations can cause toxicity problems, as has been recently demonstrated by science³. In addition to threatening human health and quality of bee products, the increase of the MRLs put at risk the health of bees.

¹See p.13 of the report at: <https://www.anses.fr/en/system/files/SUBCHIM2015SA0142.pdf>

² https://echa.europa.eu/documents/10162/13579/rac_32_final_minutes.pdf

³ Brandt, A., Gorenflo, A., Siede, R., Meixner, M., and Büchler, R. (2016). The neonicotinoid thiacloprid, imidacloprid, clothianidin and affect the immunocompetence of honey bees (*Apis mellifera* L.). *Journal of Insect Physiology* 86, 40-47.

Francesco Panella, president of Bee Life, said: "We beekeepers refuse to be complicit in this manipulation. We want to offer healthy and natural products, and we want our bees to continue playing a vital role in pollination and ensure good food productions. Instead of increasing the acceptable concentrations in our food, the European institutions should ensure to minimize the exposure of our bees and European citizens to these products. If the use of thiacloprid does not meet acceptable levels of exposure, then thiacloprid should be prohibited."

Contact

Bee Life European Beekeeping Coordination

Tel: +32 10 47 16 34

Place Croix du Sud, 4 bte L7.07.09

1348 Louvain-la-Neuve

info@bee-life.eu

www.bee-life.eu