



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Lord Gardiner of Kimble
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural
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Your ref: 20170322
Our ref: PO426784/CC

21st April 2017

Dear Dr. Wilkins,

Thank you for your letter of 28 March about bees, pollinators and the National Pollinator Strategy.

I agree that pollinators are an essential part of our environment and play a crucial role in food production and I thank you for the work that Oldham Council is doing to help support bees, pollinators and their ecosystems.

Pesticide active substances are currently assessed at EU level and are only approved if they meet safety requirements. The UK is responsible for authorising products containing approved active substances. For this we carry out a thorough assessment of the scientific evidence. Risks to bees are a key part of the assessment carried out before products are authorised. The regulatory regime also provides for regular reviews to take account of the latest information and scientific knowledge. The UK Government has implemented EU restrictions on neonicotinoids in full. Until exit negotiations are concluded, the UK remains a full member of the EU and all the rights and obligations of EU membership remain in force.

You may be aware that the NFU recently submitted two applications to the Health and Safety Executive for emergency authorisation of neonicotinoid seed treatments on oilseed rape against insect pests. The Government's independent advisers, the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) met to discuss this on 11 April and has advised that the applications do not meet the requirements for emergency authorisation. Accordingly, based on the evidence and the expert advice, George Eustice, Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, has rejected the applications.

All pesticide approvals are subject to periodic review and you may be aware that the approval of glyphosate is currently going through this process. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) co-ordinated a detailed review of health and environmental data and identified no safety concerns. The European Chemicals Agency's Committee for Risk Assessment (RAC) recently reviewed extensive data on glyphosate, and concluded that the available scientific evidence did not meet the criteria to classify glyphosate as a known, presumed or suspected carcinogen.

Defra agrees with EFSA's assessment that glyphosate meets the standards required to be approved for use and, in particular, that it is unlikely to cause cancer in humans. The RAC's opinion is consistent with EFSA's conclusions on carcinogenicity. A final decision by the European Commission as to whether the approval of glyphosate should continue is due later this year. If approval is given, Member States will review glyphosate products to ensure that they meet modern standards.

Yours sincerely
John Gaskin