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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: Pesticides minor use
- *Information from the Presidency*

Delegations will find in Annex a note from the Presidency in relation to the above mentioned subject, to be raised under "Any other business" at the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) meeting on 16-17 December 2019.

Funding of the EU Minor Uses Coordination Facility

Speciality crops represent a fundamental sector in agriculture for many European countries. These crops include most vegetables, fruit, nurseries, flowers, forest trees and some arable crops. It is estimated that overall, they represent more than € 70 billion per year, which equates to 22 % of the total EU plant production value. These crops are considered minor in terms of production scale, when compared to the overall agriculture production.

Growers face increasing difficulties in gaining authorization for “minor uses”. Minor uses of pesticides are uses on niche crops with a high economic value for farmers or exceptional limited uses in a major crop, but usually of low economic interest for the agro-pesticide industry. This leads to a lack of authorized products on the market for farmers, which in turn can lead to an increasing number of emergency authorizations, illegal uses or to loss of crop production. This is conjugated with an increase in pest resistance, and in emerging pests. With the further implementation of Integrated Pest Management schemes (IPM), limited use of plant protection products in major crops - such as spot wise application instead of full field treatments, which is also a form of minor uses - will become more and more important in the future.

To address this problem in a more coherent way the European Commission together with the EU member states France, Netherlands and Germany set up the EU Minor Uses Coordination Facility (EUMUCF) with the aim of ensuring that European Union farmers continue to be able to produce high-quality products and to create a level playing field for European Union farmers. The Facility started its actual work in September 2015 and is hosted by the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO) in Paris.

The mission of the Facility is 'to enable farmers in the EU to produce high quality crops by filling minor uses gaps through efficient collaboration to improve availability of chemical and non-chemical tools within an integrated pest management (IPM) framework'.

The MUCF works together with all Member States, growers associations and other organizations active internationally in the field of minor uses. It coordinates the knowledge transfer between the countries and the different stakeholder bodies both within the EU and at international level. The Coordination Facility is maintaining the European Minor Uses Database (EUMUDA) as a key structure to identify minor uses gaps, share information on projects and cooperate to find solutions. The launch of the new EUMUDA took place in June 2017. The Coordination Facility is promoting biological solutions and is working on new plant protection strategies, such as the introduction of alternative procedures or the Community-wide authorization of plant protection products to solve minor use problems together with its Commodity Expert Groups.

The European Commission together with the governments of France, Germany and the Netherlands funded the MUCF for a period of 3 years. Since 15 April 2018 the MUCF is fully depending on voluntary financial contributions from EU Members. To divide the burden equally, the MUCF drafted a scheme, with Member countries in three groups according to size. Each group was assigned a yearly contribution sum. However, this has not worked in practice, since only a part of the Member countries (DE, FR, AT, BE, DK, FI, NL, SE, SK, CH, CY, IE, LT, LV, SI) has paid their share.

At the Minor Uses Annual General Meeting in 2019 it was decided to explore the possibility to discuss the issue of the long-term funding of the MUCF at Council level. As a first step the issue of the long-term funding was discussed at the Standing Committee meeting (SCoPAFF) in March 2019. At the meeting several Member States supported actively that the issue of the funding of the MUCF should be solved urgently.

The funding for 2020 is not yet secured. This threatens the continuity of the MUCF and minor uses work in Europe. In July 2019 the MUCF sent out a request to Member countries for the financial contributions for 2020. To date, eleven Member countries have paid or committed their contribution for 2020.

To ensure the continuity of the MUCF, financing of the MUCF for a longer period should be guaranteed. With an annual budget of EUR 500 000 the MUCF would need in total EUR 2.5–2.7 million for a period of 5 years.