

The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for Environment
Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House 17 Smith Square London
SW1P 3JR

06/01/16

Public consultation on endocrine disruptors

Dear Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP

I am writing on behalf of CHEM Trust, the Cancer Prevention and Education Society, Breast Cancer UK, Alliance for Cancer Prevention, Pesticide Action Network UK, The Land Workers Alliance, Soil Association, Unite the Union and Hazards Magazine to draw your attention to discussions taking place in Europe which could affect the health of farm workers, and to ask if you would be willing to support our call for the better regulation of biocides and pesticides.

As you will be aware, in July 2015 the European Commission released a report on the “Public consultation on defining criteria for identifying endocrine disruptors in the implementation of the Plant Protection Product Regulation and Biocidal Products Regulation.”ⁱ

The public consultation took place between September 2014 and January 2015, with over 27,000 responses. 64% of respondents were from the UK – the majority of whom were farmers. A key issue highlighted by farmers was that crops would be insufficiently protected without a number of pesticides that would be restricted due to their endocrine disrupting properties.

Though we understand the importance of crop protection for the livelihoods of farmers and food security in the UK, we’re worried that the farming lobby is putting short term crop yields before the health of farmers and their families, agricultural workers, the general public and of course the environment itself.

The regulation would phase out harmful substances gradually, allowing time to adjust and built into the regulation is the emergency use derogation where if it can be shown that nothing else can do the job these substances can still be permitted. We therefore believe that the farmers represented in the public consultation might be a vocal minority – with other farmers being rightly worried about the effects of some biocides and pesticides.

Multiple studies have shown that farmers and agricultural workers have increased risk of certain diseases, including: prostate cancer, breast cancer, brain cancer – in both adults and in children of exposed parents, and leukaemia. There are also suggestions that exposure to endocrine disrupting pesticides and biocides might be linked with other cancers, including bladder, stomach and pancreatic cancer amongst farmers.ⁱⁱ In a recent court case, Monsanto was found guilty of poisoning a French farmer who had been using Lasso weed killer, which caused him symptoms including difficulty breathing, headaches, and memory loss.ⁱⁱⁱ

We hope you agree that as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, protecting the health of farmers and the environment should be of utmost importance. As such, will you commit to protecting the health of farmers, their families, agricultural workers, the general public and the environment itself by supporting the restriction of these harmful plant protection products?

We would appreciate hearing your views on this matter, and should you want to talk to us further about this, or if you have any questions please do feel free to get in contact.

Please reply to:
CHEM Trust
34b York Way
London
N1 9AB, UK

Yours sincerely,



Dr Michael Warhurst,
Executive Director,
CHEM Trust



Helen Lynn,
Campaigner and Researcher,
Alliance for Cancer Prevention



Jamie Page,
Chief Executive,
The Cancer Prevention and
Education Society



Lynn Ladbrook,
Chief Executive,
Breast Cancer UK



Nick Mole,
Policy Officer,
Pesticide Action Network UK



Adam Payne,
Coordinating Group,
The Land Workers Alliance



Helen Browning,
Chief Executive,
Soil Association



Len McCluskey,
General Secretary,
Unite the Union



Rory O'Neill,
Writer,
Hazards Magazine

ⁱ "Public consultation on defining criteria for identifying endocrine disruptors in the implementation of the Plant Protection Product Regulation and Biocidal Products Regulation." European Commission. 2015. Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/health/endocrine_disruptors/docs/2015_public_consultation_report_en.pdf

ⁱⁱ "A review of the role pesticides play in some cancers: Children, farmers and pesticide users at risk?" CHEM Trust. 2010. Available from: <http://www.chemtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CHEM-Trust-Report-Pesticides-Cancer-July-2010.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ "Monsanto guilty of chemically poisoning French farmer." Euronews. 2015. Available from: <http://www.euronews.com/2015/09/10/monsanto-guilty-of-chemically-poisoning-french-farmer/>