



PRESS RELEASE

Louvain la Neuve, March 7, 2016

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."

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PRESS RELEASE

Louvain la Neuve, April 27, 2016

Thiacloprid honey: European beekeepers oppose the raising of Maximum Residues Limits (continue...)

Recently, the Commission and EU member states agreed to raise the Maximum Residue Levels (MRL), for the pesticide thiacloprid in honey, to 0.2 mg/kg. As a direct result, bees, pollinators and people will be exposed to even higher concentrations of this neonicotinoid insecticide. In respect of bees, these increased levels of thiacloprid exceed those which produce toxic effects. Consequently, this action will damage biodiversity, by increasing the loss of bees and pollinators, indirectly affecting productivity in farming areas. It will also erode the iconic status of honey as: a healthy, nutritious, pesticide-free food.

On 15 April 2016, the **Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed** passed an amendment, proposed by Germany, to increase the MRLs for the thiacloprid in honey. Thiacloprid is a neonicotinoid still authorized, differently from other molecules like imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam. This decision was rushed through in a vote without previous discussion; the process was done by plant protection experts, instead of by experts in chemical residues and food safety. France and Slovenia abstained.

This seemingly small regulatory change directly threatens the health of European citizens; thiacloprid is classified by the ECHA as a carcinogen (class 2) and also as repro-toxic (class 1b). Moreover, the increase of MRLs, for thiacloprid in honey, directly threatens both bees and the entire beekeeping sector.

Francesco Panella, president of Bee Life, said:

"This is yet another example where society is forced to bear the health and environmental costs, while business reaps the financial profits. It also shows the lack of global vision of the Commission on the pesticide problem. Raising pesticide residue levels in our honey puts the 'profit motive' above: consumer health, environmental protection and agricultural productivity. To place bees and pollinators at even greater risk than they already are, is both immoral and impractical. We beekeepers will undoubtedly suffer a loss of consumer confidence in the purity of our products; we face increased costs for laboratory-analysis and we must endure even greater poisoning and deaths among our bees. We - the citizens of Europe - witness, yet again, a declining environmental quality in terms of: air, water and food."

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