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### Pesticide makers slam MEPs' market approval vote

Pesticide producers have slammed changes made by the European parliament's environment committee to draft EU rules that will comprehensively overhaul the way plant protection products are granted market approval.

In a vote on Wednesday morning the committee said some pesticide ingredients should be banned on the basis of their intrinsic hazard to nervous and immune systems, even before a risk assessment is carried out. Trade body Ecpa warned this would cause the "disappearance of many substances that have long been used safely by farmers".

Meanwhile the committee's backing for a plan to remove an existing system of rapid national authorisations for products containing new substances would increase the time to market by three years, it estimated.

"This is a major setback for the principles of sound science and rational decision making," Euros Jones of Ecpa said. "The committee has not struck a balanced approach between safeguarding both human health and environmental protection with the basic need to protect our food production."

The committee also rejected a zonal geographic approval system, tightened provisions promoting the substitution of active ingredients with safer alternatives, and strengthened links to the EU's water framework directive. Under the new wording, exceedance of pesticide concentration limits would trigger a review of the substance's market approval.

"Substitution of harmful substances with less dangerous ones can create a win-win situation," rapporteur MEP Hiltrud Breyer, a German Green, said. "Reducing risk for consumers, users and the environment, while at the same time stimulating innovation in the chemical industry". The proposals will now be considered by the full parliament, alongside related draft legislation on pesticide use controls ([EED 09/05/07](#)).

Environmental groups praised the committee's "precautionary" approach, which they said greatly improved the European commission's original proposals ([EED 13/07/06](#)). "MEPs wish to enable member states further to restrict pesticide use and better protect health and environment," said Elliott Cannell of Pesticides action network Europe.

"This vote shows that parliament has begun taking into account increasing scientific evidence that pesticide exposure, even at low doses, is a threat to people's health and even to the development of children's brains" said Monica Guarinoni of campaign group Heal.

Follow-up: [European parliament environment committee](#)

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