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Our favourite fruits, vegetables, nuts and many more are at risk

Agri-food chain Roundtable for Plant Protection raises concerns for the sector

Yesterday, MEP Anthea McIntyre along with the Agri-food chain Roundtable for Plant Protection, consisting of 19 EU associations, hosted an event in the European Parliament where they presented their concerns regarding the EU's current approach to the shaping of European policy and legislation on plant protection products (PPP), and their impact along the agri-food chain.

'Solutions are urgently needed to ensure the competitiveness of the entire agri-food chain and the supply of high quality products for European consumers. A regulatory framework that allows for innovation is key in ensuring the availability of suitable plant protection solutions.' – said Mr. Thorgrimsson, Vice-Chair of the Agri Food Chain Roundtable.

The Roundtable would like in particular to underline the following damaging developments:

- 1. Lack of available solutions for farmers** due to problems with mutual recognition, bringing new products to the market and to regulatory uncertainty (including Endocrine disruptors, candidates for substitution etc). The varying pace of implementation of mutual recognition between countries, creates distortions of competition. The lack of suitable solutions, including modern, highly effective seed treatment applications, can lead to severe consequences for growers in managing resistance development and in coping with new pests and diseases, such as *Xylella fastidiosa*, or climate-related challenge, like mycotoxins.
- 2. Increased burdensome and costly rules in regard to the approval of substances** result in a lengthy process and delays in the availability of new substances for use by growers in the European Union. The product approval process now takes 4-6 years – two years longer than under the previous legislation! The permanent reevaluation of existing substances based on new requirements further limit the available toolbox for growers.
- 3. Food security of European trade.** The lack of appropriate solutions to protect certain crops could lead to shortage of EU production. Fruit and vegetables are the cornerstone of a healthy diet, but in many cases the right tools are not available to protect these key crops. The EU minor use scheme should play an important role and needs to become operational and efficient as quickly as possible. There is a need for a single European zone for minor uses, and more generally, for fostering the spirit of Regulation EC/1107/2009: harmonisation, mutual recognition, extension of uses. Those tools should be properly implemented without excessive additional national restrictions by individual Member States. At the same time, regulatory imbalances between legislation of EU and Third countries can negatively impact trade with products that need to be imported from outside the EU.
- 4. Impact on processed products.** The current legislation does not provide the detailed rules for its practical implementation to processed products (such as for crude vegetable oils, dried fruits or essential lemon oil). This exposes EU operators to legal and trade challenges which need to be addressed.

The Roundtable is urging European and Member State authorities to ensure that the policies for plant protection products are implemented in a coherent manner across the EU, and with third countries and have issued a set of recommendations to meet the needs of European growers and consumers.

