

The UK Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP)

Advice to Ministers

Applications for an emergency authorisation for the use of 'Biscaya' as an insecticide on sugar beet

Issue

1. The Government has received an application for an emergency authorisation for the use of 'Biscaya' (contains thiacloprid) for use as an insecticide on sugar beet to control virus yellows complex transmitted by the virus vector, peach-potato aphid (*Myzus persicae*).

Action required

2. The Committee was requested to provide advice on:
 - The risk assessment for this application.
 - What information could realistically be generated by the grower/applicant to support any future emergency applications for this use?

Discussion

3. The Committee noted:
 - That the sugar beet industry has relied on neonicotinoid seed treatments (containing thiamethoxam and clothianidin) to control virus yellows complex transmitted by the virus vector, peach-potato aphid for 25 years. Authorisations for the outdoor use of these products were withdrawn in 2018. The industry has not had sufficient time to generate data to support standard on-label authorisations for alternative products, though work is currently ongoing.
 - The urgency of the application, with pest pressure developing sooner than expected. Without a suitable method of control, growers were facing yield and financial losses.
 - It had advised that a similar application, received in 2019, be granted, But that new information on appropriate endpoints were available and had been applied by HSE to the risk assessment.
 - Any emergency authorisation would only be used in England (primarily the Eastern counties).

- To reduce the risks to non-target organisms, HSE would impose a reduction in the dose rate and require the adoption of risk mitigation measures. The reduced dose rate would be sufficient to maintain an effective degree of pest control.
- The EU had concluded they would not be renewing the approval of thiacloprid. All products containing the active substance are required to have authorisations for use withdrawn from by 3 February 2021.
- HSE had concluded that:
 - The applicant had demonstrated a suitable 'case for need'.
 - Non-dietary exposure risks were acceptable provided users wore suitable Personal Protective Equipment.
 - Consumer exposures could not be fully assessed due to data gaps. However HSE's judgement was that the reduction in the (previously authorised) dose rate that they would impose in any authorisation and heavy processing of treated produce prior to consumption by consumers would limit exposures to acceptable levels.
 - Soil and surface water exposures were acceptable provided appropriate risk mitigation measures were imposed. Groundwater concentrations were assessed as having the potential to exceed normal regulatory standards (0.1µg/L), but would not adversely affect human health.
 - Ecotoxicological risks were acceptable in most cases if the proposed dose rate was reduced (from 0.4 to 0.3 l/ha) and suitable risk mitigation measures (use of low-drift technology and buffer zones) imposed. It was not possible to demonstrate an acceptable risk for non-target arthropods due to data gaps in the renewal report.

Committee advice and views

4. The Committee advised that:

- based on the evidence presented and the product being used in the way proposed by HSE, it was possible to manage key risks to human health and the environment (though, in a small number of cases it was not possible to demonstrate an acceptable risk and individual assessments were close to the edge of the risk envelope).
- It could not usefully formally advise Government on information/data that might be submitted in support of future applications given that circumstances may change, but would be happy to advise on any requirements it was considering including as a condition of authorisation.

5. ECP also took the view that:

- A case for need had been demonstrated (potentially significant agronomic impacts arising from a failure to manage the pests and a lack of a suitable range of control options).
 - There was uncertainty, based on information provided in the application, on whether the areas that that might be treated could be said to be 'limited and controlled'. It was noted that 84% of the planted area was treated with aphicides in 2019 and that it was unclear whether this scale of use correlated sufficiently closely to either the forecast need or the determination of the 'infected' area through in-field monitoring.
 - Work to breed resistant varieties appeared to have the potential to avoid long-term reliance on emergency authorisations.
6. The Committee considered that the basis of a suitable case had been presented and that the Government could consider granting an emergency authorisation.

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