



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Your ref:

Our ref: RFI 5862

Date: 25 October 2013

By email only to

Dear

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: MEETINGS BETWEEN DEFRA AND EXTERNAL PARTIES
ON THE SUBJECT OF NEONICOTINOID INSECTICIDES AND BEES**

Thank you for your request for information about meetings between Defra and any external parties relating to neonicotinoid insecticides and bees. Defra received your request on 27 September 2013. As you know, we have handled your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

Part I of your request, was for 'a list of meetings, with dates that took place between 1 January 2012 and 1 October 2013, between Defra and any external party on the subject of, or containing references to:

- Neonicotinoids;
- Clothianidin;
- Thiamethoxam;
- Imidacloprid;
- Bees and pesticides/chemicals;
- Pollinators and pesticides/chemicals'.

[Part II of your request regarding 'a list of meetings on bees/pollinators' will be answered by a separate team within Defra].

I would like to explain at the outset how we have interpreted your request for information. With regards to your reference to 'Defra', we have included meetings attended by Defra Ministers, Special Advisors (SpAd), Senior Civil Servants and officials from the Pesticides and Chemicals policy team. With regards to 'external parties', we have included meetings with Non-Government Organisations and other Government Departments, including any formal meetings with our delivery partners, the Chemicals Regulation Directorate (CRD). Although you've not specifically requested it, we have also included the names of the organisations involved, and a brief summary of the purpose of each meeting.

In my letter of 16th October with the reference number RFI 5863 (concerning Part III of your separate request for information), I explained that some of the information you have requested is already in the public domain via the Gov.uk website. Defra have already received a number of requests for information which have included details of meetings between Defra and various



stakeholders on neonicotinoid insecticides. Responses to these requests are available via the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neonicotinoids>;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/communications-on-neonicotinoids-1-june-2012-to-13-august-2013>.

Although your request is over slightly different timeframes, the previous requests are likely to include some of the information you require. As this information you have requested is already publicly available and easily accessible to you, regulation 6(1) (b) of the EIRs exempts Defra from providing this information in response to your requests. However, the regulations also require public authorities, as far as it would be reasonable, to provide advice and assistance to applicants to enable them to identify more clearly the information requested. Therefore, I have extracted the information from these previous communications (that is within scope of your request) and have summarised these below:

- 10/10/12 Defra's Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA), Professor Ian Boyd met Pesticides Action Network (PAN UK) to discuss neonicotinoids;
- 18/01/13 Former Permanent Under Secretary, Richard Benyon met Buglife to discuss the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) risk assessments for the impacts of clothianidin; thiamethoxam and imidacloprid on bees;
- 17/03/13 Parliamentary Under Secretary, Lord de Mauley met Friends of the Earth (FoE) to discuss the 'Bee Cause' campaign calling for a Bee Action Plan, and pollinators in general (N.B. this meeting focussed on wider bee health issues, but it is likely that neonicotinoids were discussed);
- 19/03/13 Defra SpAd Guy Robinson met Syngenta which included discussions of bees or other pollinators, or neonicotinoid insecticides;
- 03/04/13 Lord de Mauley and the CSA's meeting with FoE, Buglife, PAN UK, Avaaz and 38 Degrees regarding bees and neonicotinoids;
- 21/05/13 Lord de Mauley met the British Beekeeping Association (BBKA) to discuss neonicotinoids and bee health research.

In addition to the above, the following meetings are also within scope of your request:

- 12/04/12 CSA's meeting with Defra's Pesticide policy officials, Fera and CRD to discuss the implications of the scientific papers on neonicotinoids and bees;
- 26/04/12 Former Minister of State, Jim Paice attended the Agriculture Council which discussed an item on thiamethoxam;
- 10/12/12 Defra Permanent Secretary (Bronwyn Hill) meeting with the Soil Association which included discussions on neonicotinoids;
- 12/12/12 Lord de Mauley's evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) hearing into pesticides and pollinators;
- 28/01/13 The Secretary of State (SoS) Owen Paterson's appearance at the Agriculture Council to discuss EFSA's conclusions on neonicotinoids;
- 07/02/13 Former Parliamentary Under Secretary, David Heath's meeting with Scottish Government included discussions on neonicotinoids;
- 27/02/13 Lord de Mauley's attendance at the EAC hearing into pesticides and pollinators;
- 28/02/13 Permanent Secretary's meeting with the Government's Chief Scientific Advisor (GCSA), Sir John Beddington which may have included discussions on neonicotinoids;

- 05/03/13 CSA's meeting with European Commission officials to discuss the scientific evidence on neonicotinoids;
- 06/03/13 Permanent Secretary's meeting with the National Farmers Union to discuss a number of issues (neonicotinoids was likely to have been discussed);
- 18/03/13 The SoS attended the Agriculture Council which discussed neonicotinoids;
- 11/04/13 Defra Pesticide policy officials meeting with the GCSA to discuss the Defra position on neonicotinoids;
- 17/05/13 CSA's meeting with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust which included discussions on neonicotinoids;
- 12/06/13 SoS's appearance before the Scottish Parliament Rural Affairs and Environment Committee where neonicotinoid insecticides and bees was an item on the agenda;
- 11/07/13 MoS's meeting with Joan Walley MP regarding pollinators/pesticides;
- 17/07/13 SoS's attendance at the all-Party Parliamentary Gardening and Horticulture Group where neonicotinoids were raised;
- 03/09/13 CSA's meeting with Defra's pesticide policy and CRD officials including discussions on bees/neonicotinoids and the current Defra funded research;
- 13/09/13 Pesticide policy officials meeting with Syngenta and Bayer on neonicotinoids research.

Neonicotinoids, bees and other pollinators were also discussed at the following Inter-Departmental Pesticides Committee (IDPC) Meetings. The list below covers meetings scheduled to discuss neonicotinoids, or where there is a record that the issue was raised.

- 23/05/12 IDPC 17;
- 20/09/12 IDPC 18;
- 07/12/12 IDPC 19;
- 15/02/13 IDPC 20;
- 22/05/13 IDPC 21;
- 18/09/13 IDPC 22.

It is of course possible that neonicotinoids were mentioned at other meetings between Defra and external parties but where no formal minutes/records were taken. There were also a number of frequent discussions between Defra (as the policy lead) and CRD (as the regulator and technical/policy support). However, these were ad hoc and un-minuted, and it is not possible to provide a list.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the EIRs, and in keeping with the government's Transparency Agenda, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you will now be published on www.gov.uk together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. Please note that this will not include your personal data.

I attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you. I also attach Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Pesticide and Chemicals Policy
Chemicals and Emerging Technologies
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Tel:
Email:

Annex A

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Annex B

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under Regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Mike Kaye, Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF