From: [redacted]
To: Robinson, Guy (Defra)
Cc: nick.hillman@bis.gsi.gov.uk <nick.hillman@bis.gsi.gov.uk>
Sent: Sat Apr 13 10:17:40 2013
Subject: Syngenta - [redacted] - FW: EU decision on neonicotinoids

Dear Guy,

I hope that your trip to Australia/New Zealand has been successful.

For reference and consideration I forward to you a letter sent from [redacted] to the Secretary of State yesterday afternoon. It is attached but for ease I have also pasted the text of the letter below.

This letter was copied to Rt. Hon. David Willetts, MP when sent yesterday. Accordingly, I have copied Nick Hillman into this email for reference also.

In addition to the letter there are two papers attached to this email –

1. The first (not sent to SoS) is a number of suggested amendments to the COMM proposal on neonicotinoids which we hope Defra officials will consider, assess, and advise upon with a view to UK Rep discussing with other Member State governments.
2. The second addresses the points raised in the letter regarding the series of regulatory proposals currently being pursued in Brussels and flags the potential compounded impact on EU farming in the coming years (a concerted attack on European farming);

Syngenta understands the political pressures regarding the issue of bee health and appreciates the UK government's determination to promote science based assessments and decisions.

As set out in our recent bee health action plan Syngenta remains committed to building upon work we have undertaken over the past ten years to address variables adversely impacting bees. In advocating our position we look only to achieve proportionate, science-based outcomes in regard to the regulation of our products.

Please contact me should you want to further discuss the letter or the associated documents.

Regards,

[redacted]
Syngenta
Jealott's Hill International Research Centre
Bracknell, Berks RG42 6EY
[redacted]

TEXT OF LETTER

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to ask the United Kingdom to maintain its strong leadership in developing a more proportionate response to the EFSA review of the risk which neonicotinoid pesticides allegedly pose to bees ahead of the EU Appeal Committee at the end of the month.

As you know, DG SANCO has put forward a proposal to restrict their use on all bee attractive crops. I believe you also agree that this is an entirely disproportionate response to some highly theoretical risks for which there is no evidence in the field. I noted with interest the recent FERA study which underlined this point.

However, our reading of the situation is that unless a more proportionate alternative text is quickly advanced by a Member State, like the United Kingdom, there is a high probability that the existing proposal from DG SANCO will be implemented by default.

The UK leadership on this issue has clearly had impact particularly through the AOB point which you raised in the last Agriculture Council meeting. I understand that this made a number of Member States think about and potentially reconsider their position. I also understand that a number of them are now looking to the United Kingdom to bring forward an alternative proposal which would allow Member States to continue to use these pesticides, including for seed treatment, under strict conditions even if an EU-wide restriction is adopted.

I cannot stress enough what a regressive step the implementation of the existing DG SANCO proposal would be for technological innovation in agriculture in the UK and Europe. Its impact would be compounded by two other regulatory initiatives – an approach to regulating chemicals, including pesticides, which contain endocrine disruption properties, and EFSA's bee risk assessment guidance document. Although these initiatives originate in different parts of the Commission they amount to a concerted attack on the key technologies critical to farmers and would remove 80% of all fungicides and nearly all insecticides from the market.

At a time when this is happening, the current DG SANCO proposal would establish an unwelcome precedent that highly theoretical risk counts for more than field based evidence indicating no actual harm.

In the first instance, I would ask you to consider whether there is value in proposing a discussion about this **"concerted attack on key farm technologies"**, described in the enclosed paper, at the next Agriculture Council meeting on April 22nd. Critically, this takes place one week before the Commission's Appeal Committee on 29th April. Such an intervention could help other farm Ministers to understand the context within which the neonicotinoid decision will be made. Perhaps this could be addressed under another Council AOB point?

Secondly, if the United Kingdom is prepared to put forward a more proportionate alternative proposal, I would urge you to do this as quickly as possible and seek to build a majority, if not a qualified majority, of Member States support. This could ultimately impede DG SANCO's apparent rush toward a default implementation of its current proposal.

For your information, I recently met with your colleague, the Minister for Universities and Science, David Willetts, and made similar points to him as well as making clear our full support for the Government's Agriculture Technology Strategy.

I hope that this letter is helpful and remain at your disposal should you require more information or have any questions.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Defra Strategy and Private Office Directorate

[redacted]