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In May 2013, **the European Commission announced a two-year restriction on the use of three neonicotinoids - thiamethoxam, imidacloprid and clothianidin - and of the insecticide fipronil.**

The ban on these substances came following the findings of a risk assessment conducted by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) which identified a number of risks they pose to bee populations.

Two giants of the agro-industrial pesticide industry: **Syngenta**, manufacturer of thiamethoxam, **and Bayer**, producer of imidacloprid and clothianidin, **have now decided to challenge the European Commission's decision before the European Court of Justice.**

The **industry**, which **is interested in maintaining its giant business**, claims the ban is unjustified and disproportionate for the following points of contention:

- 1) Neonicotinoids do not affect the health of bees. The principle factors in their decline are pathogens, climatic changes and the destruction of their habitats.
- 2) The Commission's decision was made without the backing of all EU Member States.
- 3) The EFSA's risk evaluation was inadequate and incomplete.

Elsewhere, **the European Beekeeping Coordination states that the Commission's decision is completely justified** . In fact they say **it should have been more stringent, including the suspension of ALL uses of neonicotinoid pesticides**

□ most notably in seed treatment of cereals in the winter, their use in greenhouses and in the production of seeds.

Why? For these reasons:

1) The risks associated with these pesticides for bees - a pillar of our biodiversity - are recognized by EFSA scientists. Research has also shown a wide dispersion and persistence of these substances in the environment. Measures must therefore be taken in the name of precaution. The decline of other pollinating insects, such as wild bees and butterflies, is not linked to pathogens that affect honeybees; nor is it linked to "bad beekeeping practices".

2) Although not all EU Member States voted in favor of the ban, a simple majority was reached: 15 out of 27 countries. In the absence of a qualified majority, the decision rests with the Commission.

3) The EFSA's re-evaluation of the risks these three neonicotinoids present includes new scientific information regarding their chronic toxicity and non-lethal effects on bees.

Given that Syngenta and Bayer see the suspension as unjustified, their alternative is a plan of action to save the bees. This includes increasing the amount of pollinating flowers, as well as risk prevention measures such as the correct use of their products.

Alongside a total ban, **the European Beekeeping Coordination wants to see the promotion of agricultural practices that respect pollinating insects** and an agricultural policy that calls into question the use of pesticides, monocultures and the use of GMOs.

According to a spokesperson for the European Commission, the judicial procedure that will follow the legal action of Syngenta and Bayer will not stop the implementation of the restriction

on neonicotinoids.

For the European Beekeeping Coordination, the Commission's decision was made on a clear legal basis. **The industry's lawsuit does not therefore come from judicial interest, but is rather, and only, a demonstration of power and a political attack.**

Pesticide Action Network Europe and the Confederation of Farmers intend to appeal the decision, asking the Commission to declare a complete ban on the use of these three insecticides.{jcomments on}

Sources: Coordinamento Apistico Europeo (EBC). [Neonicotinoids: Syngenta and Bayer take the Commission to court](#) (FR) Slow Food.  
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