



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Health and food audits and analysis
Director

Grange,
SANTE.F3.RH/ca

Subject: Sustainable use of pesticides

Dear Mr Roy,

Thank you for your letter of 26 February 2021 to the Director-General, Sandra Gallina concerning the Commission's evaluation and planned revision of the sustainable use of pesticides Directive. I appreciate the efforts made by the European hop industry to implement integrated pest management and reduce the use and risk of pesticides. These actions are in line with the ambitions of the EU Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy to reduce the use and risk of chemical pesticides.

During the public feedback process on the Commission's evaluation roadmap and inception impact assessment for this initiative, carried out from May to August 2020, we received specific inputs from the Association of German Hop Growers and Hop Growers' Union of the Czech Republic. Reference was also made to the International Hop Growers' Convention (IHGC) resolution of 12 November 2018 and the Global Hop Summit, which took place in Brussels in November 2019.

I agree that the careful and effective use of pesticides, when appropriate and necessary, can be an important element in integrated pest management programmes. I note your concern that, despite modern growing practices, it is becoming harder and harder to grow hops and remain viable as the availability of authorised and effective pesticides reduces.

I do not accept, however, that the Commission frames its policies without considering their impact on food production; crop yields; the need for additional resources to grow crops without pesticides; or on farmers' livelihoods. The published evaluation roadmap and inception impact assessment specifically address these issues as factors to take into account when deciding future policy.

I would also direct you to the REFIT evaluation of the pesticides legislation, which the Commission published on 20 May 2020. This found, contrary to the perception of many stakeholders, that since the entry into force in 2011 of the Plant protection products regulation (EC) 1107/2009, the number of approved active substances has increased: from 427 in 2011 to 486 in 2018. Today the figure stands at 466. It is true that the industry has recently withdrawn several widely used active substances or has not renewed their approval due to safety concerns. This was indeed the case for all of the substances mentioned in your

Mr. Leslie A. Roy
President
International Hop Growers Convention

letter. You will surely agree with me that the safety of pesticides is a condition *sine qua non* for their continued use.

I share your view that farmers must be able to protect their crops, using safer alternatives to the substances mentioned in your letter. That is why the Farm to Fork Strategy commits the Commission to facilitating the marketing of pesticides containing biologically active substances and reducing the length of time taken to authorize pesticides in the Member States. In this context, DG Health and Food Safety is working intensely with Member State experts to update the data requirements and assessment methodologies for microorganisms, which offer the greatest potential as low-risk active substances. We will also finance a series of Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) training courses and workshops for Member States authorities to increase their expertise in this field. Furthermore, the Commission has allocated ten million euros over the next few years to support research in the areas of food, bio-economy, agriculture, natural resources, environment and digital technologies.

Finally, I wish to thank you once again for your engagement with our work. I encourage you to continue to share your organisation's views and specific expertise on how we could enhance the implementation of integrated pest management and on the tools that would facilitate the adoption of more sustainable practices in the hops sector across the EU in the future.

Yours sincerely,

(e-signed)

María Pilar Aguar Fernández
Director