

EU environmental groups say proposed pesticide rules would ‘water down’ protection for pollinators

EU countries expressed their preference for a way of regulating potentially bee-harming pesticides that has been contested by environmental NGOs.

EU countries’ representatives held an informal vote in a Commission-chaired standing committee, [July 16 and 17], and — according to a person familiar with the proceedings — overall indicated that the impact pesticides have on bees should be assessed based on the “natural variability” of a colony’s mortality. Fifteen countries backed that approach at a meeting on June 30, and last week’s roundtable yielded a similar result, the person said.

[Editor’s note: To learn more about bees and pesticides, read [The world faces ‘pollinator collapse’? How and why the media get the science wrong time and again.](#)]

The NGOs Pesticide Action Network and BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination have argued this approach will water down EU protections for pollinators. “In a dossier based in such large uncertainties, the precautionary principle would imply the adoption of the most protective approach,” BeeLife’s Noa Simon wrote in a statement.

The Commission is currently revising its bee guidance document — a set of strict guidelines for screening pesticides’ impact on bees that was initially written in 2013, but which a majority of EU countries have blocked. Now the Commission is seeking the green light for a new approach to bee protection to break the impasse.

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