

France poised to lift neonicotinoid insecticide ban to save pest-ravaged sugar beet industry

The French government is planning to lift a blanket ban on the use of neonicotinoids to help save its sugar beet industry. Sugar beet crops in France have been ravaged by aphids this year with widespread yield losses reported across the country, its agricultural ministry said on Thursday 6 August.

UK beet growers are also experiencing crop losses this season due to high levels of virus yellows showing in crops. The peach potato aphid (*Myzus persicae*) is the main vector for spreading the virus in beet crops – and it can cause yield losses of between 25-50%.

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The French government announced a series of measures to support the “unprecedented crisis” facing its sugar beet growers, including for the first time a derogation to use neonic seed treatments for the 2021 season – and, if necessary, for 2022 and 2023.

“French beet growers face an unprecedented crisis: yellow virus transmitted by aphids has developed massively in all French producing regions and is going to very strongly impact beet production,” the ministry said.

This follows similar derogations in other EU countries such as Belgium, Spain and Poland To date, the UK government has resisted calls for similar derogations on neonic use for British growers.

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