

Neonicotinoids are restricted or banned in some European countries. Why is it so hard to find safer and more effective alternative pesticides?

The [French] government has just issued a decree authorizing, by way of exemption, the use in 2023 of sugar beet seeds coated with neonicotinoids. The practice has been banned since 2016 by the Biodiversity law, but in the absence of alternatives, crops are at the mercy of aphids and the diseases they transmit. [In 2020, jaundice had caused the loss of 35% to 40% of harvests](#) [a yellowing virus introduced by aphids], putting the entire sector in danger. “Whatever happens, this is the last exemption” granted to beet growers, assured, on January 6 on Franceinfo, Christophe Béchu, the Minister of Ecological Transition. “It’s a matter of consistency, health and respect for the environment,” he added.

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The Technical Beet Institute (ITB) is working on ways to do without neonicotinoids. So far, nothing deployable on a large scale has come out of laboratories and experimental fields.

“Many statements are made in the media, but concretely, we know that it will be complex, hybrid. It’s a race against time. Currently, the sugar beet industry does not have a solution to prevent the consequences of vector/virosis multiplication like neonicotinoids do.”

[Editor’s note: This article has been translated from French and edited for clarity]

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