POSITION OF AGRICULTURAL TRADE UNIONS IN EUROPE ON

PESTICIDES

Issue

EFFAT refers to the many reports from member organisations on injured and sick workers and smallholders from the agricultural and horticultural sectors who have come into contact with the residues of pesticides applied by others or after the active use of various pesticides.

Data situation

Despite years of discussions and presentations on accidents and illnesses by many social groups, no reliable data have been presented by the competent authorities in the European countries and the European institutions to date.

Demand	Occupational reports on illnesses and accidents involving chemical pesticides should be given their own code and statistically recorded with doctors, hospitals and accident insurance institutions. These records should be collected from a national body and made available to the social partners free of charge.

Failure of the control authorities

EFFAT member organisations repeatedly report that the responsible control institutions (labour inspectorates, health services, social security prevention agencies, trade unions, science and other institutions) have no or inadequate technical and knowledge-based equipment at their disposal, which are not in a position to sufficiently recognise the problems of workers and small producers and to implement the necessary remedies.

Demand	EFFAT is committed to ensuring that the competent national inspection bodies have sufficient human and technical resources. They should maintain a contractual or legal relationship with the relevant trade unions and smallholder organisations in order to be able to provide more effective awareness-raising and information to affected workers and smallholders.

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Recognition of occupational diseases through handling or long-term contact with pesticides

Employees who become ill as a result of handling or long-term contact with pesticides are not adequately protected in their rights. They are often faced with unreasonable bureaucratic demands and sometimes have to provide unrealistic evidence.

Demand	The burden of proof must be reversed and not imposed on the employee. Occupational diseases and accidents should be recognised as such. The data on the proof must be transferred from the employee to the institutions of the accident insurance institutions. Appropriate instruments can be provided by the relevant trade unions (phytosanitary diaries and similar).

Access requirements for pesticide users

Trade union representatives repeatedly report on workers and smallholders who (must) actively use pesticides without enough knowledge. This practice leads to illnesses and accidents.

Demand	Based on the relevant European and national legislation, all users of pesticides should be allowed to act only after presentation of a certificate. This certificate should be renewed at appropriate intervals and familiarise those concerned with the new developments in plant protection.

Protection of indirectly affected workers and smallholders

The protection of workers sent to the area of active substances after pesticide application (especially in greenhouses) needs to be improved. Rules on time limits for re-entry are often not sufficiently observed. This leads to accidents and illnesses among workers who are themselves inactive pesticide users.

Demand	Information and knowledge of the effects of pesticides are also useful for workers and small producers to protect themselves and others from the negative consequences of contact with pesticides. Improvements in vocational training and information and awareness-raising campaigns are suitable for this purpose. These must also include the consequences for indirectly affected workers and small farmers.

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	Workers and small farmers should be adequately protected against drift and entry from pesticide applications by others.

Protection of users in tractors

Users of pesticides in tractors often mistakenly believe that a cab provides enough protection against pesticides. A note in the operating manual of the machine is not sufficient to put an end to this incorrect view and to ensure sufficient protection for the user. It is also unreasonable to expect users to wear the prescribed personal protective equipment in a closed tractor cab.

Demand	EFFAT is committed to providing sufficient filters against pesticides when new tractors with cabins are registered, if these machines are intended for the use of pesticides. Old machines should be retrofitted if possible. This retrofitting should be encouraged.

Authorisation of pesticides

The discussions on the approval of glyphosate have repeatedly highlighted the dependence of approval authorities on information from pesticide manufacturers. In particular, the lack of transparency and insufficient scientific neutrality were criticised.

Demand	EFFAT is committed to independent and neutral regulatory authorities. The authorisation process should be transparent and the necessary information for a new pesticide should be made available to interested parties. The relevant trade unions should be given information rights on pesticides to be authorised and on the need for new authorisation. Workers in control and approval authorities have long been demanding validated and accessible as well as deposited detection methods for all pesticides and their degradation products. EFFAT supports these workers in their demands. EFFAT calls for a review of the limit values and a critical evaluation of the zoning concept in the EU. For pesticides already authorised, the necessary information should be created and made available promptly and comprehensively.

Prohibition of glyphosate

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The plant treatment agent glyphosate is still suspected of being carcinogenic. The use of this pesticide should therefore be discontinued.

Demand	The plant treatment product glyphosate should be banned immediately, and residual stocks should be withdrawn from the market. A ban on the placing on the market and the cessation of the use of glyphosate should be achieved. Appropriate alternative methods should be developed and promoted in order to be able to carry out land treatment in a safe way in the future.

Prohibition of particularly dangerous pesticides

Particularly dangerous pesticides (based on WHO and PAN Europe lists) continue to pose a major risk to users, the environment, consumers and products.

Demand	Particularly dangerous pesticides should lose authorisation and their use should be prohibited. Products treated with such pesticides should be excluded from import into Europe. Conversion programmes in developing countries and other user countries should be encouraged.

Promotion of pesticide-free production methods

Not using pesticides is the best way to protect users, the environment, consumers and products.

Demand	EFFAT is committed to promoting organic farming with clear objectives. Organic farming production methods should be integrated into vocational training systems and vocational training for organic farming promoted. Organic products should be particularly promoted in export advertising.

Promotion of pesticide-reduced production processes

Pesticide-reduced production processes are a small but sensible step to reduce the impact of pesticides on users, the environment, consumers and products.

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Demand	EFFAT is committed to promoting good practice programmes. However, these should only be supported if clear pesticide reductions are linked and demonstrated with these programmes.

Promotion of pesticide-free regions and products

Pesticide-free regions and pesticide-free product line programmes are important contributions to protecting users, the environment, consumers and products from the dangers of pesticides.

Demand	EFFAT is committed to the creation of pesticide-free regions. EFFAT calls for support for producer groups and product consortia that are pesticide-free.

Involvement of relevant trade unions and smallholder farmers' organisations in national pesticide reduction programmes

National pesticide reduction programmes are useful tools to better protect people, the environment and products from the consequences of inappropriate pesticide use. It is therefore necessary for an efficient implementation of these programmes to involve the responsible national trade unions and smallholder organisations in the organisation and implementation of these reduction programmes.

Demand	The responsible trade unions and smallholder farmers' organisations should be supported by the bodies responsible for the national reduction programmes in order to be able to participate actively in reduction programmes. The responsible trade unions are committed to clear targets, timetables for reduction targets, monitoring implementation and regular evaluations of reduction targets.

Promoting the preventive activities of the relevant trade unions

The relevant trade unions and smallholder organisations are conducting their own information and awareness-raising campaigns for affected workers and smallholders in order to better

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protect them against the negative consequences of handling pesticides, protect the environment and improve product safety.

Demand	The relevant national institutions should provide assistance and support to the relevant trade unions and smallholder organisations in conducting information and awareness-raising campaigns.

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