



Swedish Society for Nature Conservation



**Friends of  
the Earth  
Europe**

# ***PAN Europe***

***Pesticides Action Network Europe***

## NGOs and Trade Unions disappointed with EU's failure to ban dangerous pesticide Paraquat

**Brussels (Friday, 3 October, 2003)** The EU failed to ban Paraquat, one of the most dangerous and controversial herbicides in the world. Member States took the weaker option when voting in the EU Commission's Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health on whether to add paraquat to the list of active substances authorised at EU level. Paraquat use will now continue.

A coalition of Trade Unions and environmental NGOs urged the Commission to withdraw its proposal to include Paraquat in the Annex 1 of the Pesticides Authorisation Directive 91/414.

The coalition argues that workers and farmers around the world who are regularly exposed to the Paraquat pesticide experience serious problems with their health. Paraquat is an extremely dangerous substance, which may cause severe and irreversible damage to humans. Its high toxicity and lack of antidote can lead to serious ill-health, and even death. Studies also indicate that paraquat has adverse effects on hares and birds, and may accumulate in soil.

'The Commission's approval of Paraquat for the EU-wide marketing is irresponsible', says John Hontelez, Secretary General of EEB. 'We urgently need a general reform of Europe's chemical policy, which prevents serious or long-term damage to human health and environment by forcing the substitution of such unacceptable chemicals with safer alternatives.'

Because of its acute toxicity, Paraquat is banned in Austria, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, and seriously restricted in Germany, and Malaysia has implemented a phased ban.

'Adding Paraquat to the positive list will now allow greater use of this toxic substance and could force it back onto the market in countries where it is currently banned. It will also encourage its further use in developing countries, despite the known dangers it poses to humans and the environment.' says IUF Secretary General, Ron Oswald.

The European Commission is aware of the dangers of Paraquat, but nevertheless has approved its use, ignoring a growing number of Member States who openly rejected an EU-wide approval of paraquat, postponing a vote at the last four Committee meetings.

Environmental NGOs and Trade Unions demand that the Commission takes note of the growing opposition to the approval of Paraquat and reverse its decision, prioritising the protection of human health and the environment.

*Notes for editors:*

1. The perils of paraquat: <http://217.154.68.186/pestnews/pn60/pn60p4.htm>

Paraquat exposure and Parkinson's Disease: [http://www.pan-germany.org/download/fact\\_paraquat.pdf](http://www.pan-germany.org/download/fact_paraquat.pdf)

Paraquat and suicide: [http://www.pan-germany.org/download/fact\\_paraquat2.pdf](http://www.pan-germany.org/download/fact_paraquat2.pdf)

*For more information, contact:*

Pernilla Malmer, International Secretary for Agriculture, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation,  
tel: + 46 8 702 65 81; e-mail: [Pernilla.Malmer@snf.se](mailto:Pernilla.Malmer@snf.se); <http://www.snf.se/english.cfm>

Stefan Scheuer, European Environmental Bureau; tel: + 32 496 258 682; e-mail:  
[stefan.scheuer@eeb.org](mailto:stefan.scheuer@eeb.org); EEB website: [www.eeb.org](http://www.eeb.org)

Catherine Wattiez, Pesticides Action Network Europe; tel:+32 2 358 2926; e-mail:  
[catherine.wattiez@skynet.be](mailto:catherine.wattiez@skynet.be); [www.pan-europe.net](http://www.pan-europe.net)

Joanna Dober Sullivan; Friends of the Earth Europe; tel: + 32 2 542 0188; e-mail:  
[joanna.dober@foeeurope.org](mailto:joanna.dober@foeeurope.org), <http://www.foeeurope.org>

Peter Rossman; International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and  
Allied Workers Associations; tel: + 41 22 793 2233, e-mail: [peter.rossman@iuf.org](mailto:peter.rossman@iuf.org)