

How the European Commission approves substances used in plant protection products (pesticides)

Case 1570/2018/JF - Opened on 08/03/2019 - Decision on 30/11/2020 - Institution concerned European Commission (No further inquiries justified) |

Case 1973/2018/JF - Opened on 08/03/2019 - Decision on 30/11/2020 - Institution concerned European Commission (No further inquiries justified) |

This inquiry concerned how the European Commission approves 'active substances' used in pesticides. In particular, the Ombudsman looked into the Commission's practice of approving active substances for which the European Food Safety Authority ('EFSA') - the EU body in charge of the scientific safety assessment - said that it identified critical areas of concern or that it identified no safe use. The Ombudsman also revisited the Commission's practice of approving substances for which additional data confirming their safety is needed. In the context of her inquiry, the Ombudsman set out in detail to the Commission why she considers that its current practices raise concerns. While the Commission maintained that its practices comply with the applicable legal provisions, it listed changes and improvements it has made to address the issues raised. Specifically, it informed the Ombudsman of several measures that should improve the approval process and increase its transparency. The Ombudsman closed the inquiry with three suggestions to the Commission: to ensure that it approves substances based only on uses that have been confirmed to be safe by EFSA; that the approval process is fully transparent; and that its use of the confirmatory data procedure is further restricted.