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Ombudsman investigates whether the Commission should do more to combat increased bee mortality

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The European Ombudsman, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, has opened an investigation into whether the European Commission has taken appropriate measures to combat increased bee mortality in the EU, which is potentially linked to certain insecticides. This follows a complaint from the Austrian Ombudsman Board, alleging that the Commission has failed to take into account new scientific evidence arguing in favour of restricting the use of these insecticides. The Ombudsman has asked the Commission to submit an opinion by 30 June 2012.

Increased bee mortality possibly linked to certain insecticides

The Commission has authorised the use of a number of insecticides, known as neonicotinoids, for plant protection purposes. The relevant regulation provides for a review process concerning the authorisation of substances in case new scientific evidence indicates that they no longer fulfil the approval criteria, for example, because they pose a threat to animal health.

According to the Austrian Ombudsman Board, observations from beekeepers, as well as new scientific evidence, suggest that certain neonicotinoids have led to increased bee mortality in recent years.

The problem of increased bee mortality has also been the subject matter of a number of parliamentary questions to the European Commission over the past few years. In 2011, the Commission stated that it was aware of the toxicity of neonicotinoids. It argued, however, that their use should be possible if exposure is limited to non-harmful levels.

According to the complainant, the Commission has failed properly to address the issue of bee mortality, which may be linked to the use of certain neonicotinoids. In its view, the Commission should take new scientific evidence into account and take appropriate measures, such as reviewing the authorisation of relevant substances, in order to address the problem.

Information about the opened inquiry is available at:
<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/cases/caseopened.faces/en/11407/html.bookmark>