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ESA is the voice of the European seed industry, representing those active in research, breeding, production and marketing of seeds of agricultural and ornamental plant species. It represents more than 30 national seed associations (and with that more than 7000 seed businesses in the EU) and more than 60 direct company members.

ESA's mission is to work for fair and proportionate regulation of the European seed industry, freedom of choice for customers in supplying seeds as a result of innovative, diverse technologies and production methods and for effective protection of intellectual property rights relating to plants and seed.

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PRESS RELEASE



Study reveals economic and environmental benefits of insecticide seed treatment for EU food chain and society

More than €17 billion of economic activity based on neonicotinoid seed treatment over a 5 year period, say experts

The Berlin-based think tank “Humboldt Forum for Food and Agriculture” (HFFA) today released the first comprehensive review of the socio-economic and environmental value of neonicotinoid seed treatment (application of specific insecticides to seed prior to sowing) within the European Union. The study, conducted in late 2012, is based on data collected at country level from a broad base of industry experts, practitioners and farmers.

The report, which is supported by ESA, Copa-Cogeca (European Farmers Union) and ECPA (European Crop Protection Association) finds that neonicotinoid seed treatment contributes more than €2 billion annually to commodity crop revenues and reduces production costs by €1 billion across the EU. The true annual economic benefit of neonicotinoids to the grower, when compared to not using pesticides at all, is over €4 billion.

In total, over a five year period, a ban of these products which is currently advocated by some groups in view of their alleged negative impact on bee health, would erode the EU's economic welfare by up to €17 billion and put the jobs of over a million people engaged in arable production at risk; at least 50,000 farm jobs would disappear if the technology was banned.

The study also reveals the neonicotinoid's impact on global food production and the environment. If the products would no longer be available, this would need to be compensated by making 3 million hectares of new land available outside of the EU and led to significant additional CO2 emissions.

Commenting on the release of the report at a presentation in Brussels, ESA's Secretary General Garlich von Essen said:

“Seed treatment is the technology of choice for the seed industry and for farmers and vegetable growers across Europe. It allows targeted crop protection with minimal quantities of pesticides, saves labour, time and energy, and avoids CO2 emissions and external land use. This new report shows just how crucial neonicotinoid seed treatments are for the competitiveness of the agri-food chain and what is at stake for our economy and the environment.”

ESA is urging the European Commission and Member States to reflect on the findings of the report in the further discussion of seed treatments. “The report is based on an economic impact assessment approach that should serve as reference for such discussions in the future. It allows decision makers a truly informed judgement of all relevant economic aspects in a policy debate.”

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