ESA – European Seed Association - Press

EFSA states high level of uncertainty in its evaluations of neonicotinoids and their impact on bee health

The European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) today published a report on its review of some neonicotinoid seed treatments and their impact on bees.
In its statement, EFSA acknowledges that there still is a high level of uncertainty in its latest evaluation because its own risk assessment process for bees is still under development and consequently some data was not even elaborated when the products where originally authorised.
In a first reaction to the report, Garlich von Essen, Secretary General of ESA said: “EFSA focusses on quite theoretical, potential risks to bees, and identifies a number of perceived data gaps. Yet, the requirements to generate such data did not exist upon the time of authorisation and are not even part of an agreed and published standard today.”
At the same time, ESA is surprised that a lot of existing information from years of independent monitoring has been largely disregarded. “These findings demon-strate that identified potential risks can be managed and are being managed through established stewardship and good agricultural practices. It seems that this information has not been taken fully into account – but maybe that is due to the quite tight timeline within which EFSA had to deliver this report.”
ESA considers it therefore important to finalise the EFSA guidance document for the risk assessment of plant protection products and bees to overcome the high level of uncertainty in the latest evaluations. Furthermore, all relevant information and experience should be taken into account in order to assess practical effects rather than theoretical risks.
“Bees and other pollinators are of utmost importance to the plant breeding sector and its customers and it is important to assure that we use our crop protection products in a safe and sustainable manner. We still believe that seed treatment is a highly precise and modern technology that applies only minimum dosages in a very targeted manner and is therefore rightly the technology of choice for farmers and growers all across crops and countries. “

Innovations such as neonicotinoids are vital tools for farmers in protecting crops, which provide our food, and they contribute enormous socio-economic and envi-ronmental benefits underlined in this week’s Humboldt Forum report which reveals that neonicotinoid technology annually contributes 4.5bn EUR and more than 50,000 farming jobs to the European economy.