

31st May 2016

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about neonicotinoid insecticides and bees.

I entirely agree with you that bees and other pollinators play a vital role in the security of our food supply and the quality of our environment. I welcome the Government's work to understand and protect them, most recently through the National Pollinator Strategy.

Pesticides are tightly regulated and decisions on their approval are made at the European level. Since December 2013, three of the five currently approved neonicotinoids are not permitted for use on a wide range of crops considered attractive to bees. The Government has implemented these restrictions in full and they will remain in place unless the European Commission decides to change them.

The European Food Safety Authority has begun a review of the science relating to neonicotinoids and bees, which is expected to conclude in the summer. The Government is contributing fully to this review, because any decisions must be based on solid evidence.

There are rules providing for the use of normally restricted products to be authorised in emergency situations to protect crops. If emergency authorisation is granted, this does not mean that the ban has been lifted: the facility to allow strictly controlled, targeted uses of pesticides under an emergency authorisation is an essential feature of precautionary bans.

These decisions are taken based on recommendations from the Expert Committee on Pesticides, the independent body of scientists that advises the Government. It takes all environmental factors into account, including the effects of using greater quantities of less effective alternative pesticides.

Last year the Committee recommended that an application for these treatments, covering no more than 5 per cent of the national crop and only on seeds to be sown in the summer and autumn, should be approved. Based on this advice Defra agreed to grant this limited authorisation, covering areas where crops were at the greatest risk of damage by pests.

This year there was an application to use neonicotinoids on a third of the country's oilseed rape crop, but the Committee advised that the application did not give sufficient assurances that the use would be limited to those areas most in danger, nor that it would be controlled appropriately. Accordingly, Defra followed the advice of the Committee and declined the application.

Rest assured that restrictions on neonicotinoids will not be removed as long as the evidence shows that they should remain.

Follow Alok on Twitter: @AlokSharma_RDG

**Please reply to: Alok Sharma MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA
e: alok.sharma.mp@parliament.uk w: www.aloksharma.co.uk t: 0118 941 3803**

Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me about this important issue.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP