

O.05 - The crop protection industry: Why we need Pesticides in Integrated Crop Protection in Europe

Doig, R.

ECPA-European Crop Protection Association aisbl, 6 Avenue E Van Nieuwenhuyse, 1160 Brussels, Belgium

Contact: Claudia.michel@ecpa.eu

Abstract

The need for increasing food production on land available for cultivation has become dramatically exposed by the rapid changes in global food stocks and the escalation in prices seen over the past 18 months. There is now a consensus view that for the foreseeable future global demand growth for food will outstrip the growth in global supply, due to increasing populations, growth in per capita food consumption in major developing countries, and demand for bio-fuels. With little additional land available to bring into production, the necessary production growth will have to come to a very large extent from a growth in productivity of the land already being farmed. Only by using the best of modern technologies can the necessary productivity gains be achieved. For crop protection this means using pesticides as part of an overall programme of integrated pest management. The current regulatory environment in Europe is driving more and more crop protection products off the market, restricting choices for growers, limiting the modes of action available, and putting not only minor crops production at risk. The crop protection industry is committed to producing effective, safe products for the range of problems faced by growers today and in the future, and it is vital that European Union regulations encourage the necessary research and investment in such technologies.

The need for increasing food production on land available for cultivation has become dramatically exposed by the rapid changes in global food stocks and the escalation in prices seen over the past 18 months. There is now a consensus view that for the foreseeable future global demand growth for food will outstrip the growth in global supply, due to increasing populations, growth in per capita food consumption in major developing countries, and demand for bio-fuels. This global need for more food will sharpen growing problems with hunger and malnutrition in developing countries but will also exacerbate de-forestation and water scarcity issues.

With little additional land available to bring into production, the necessary production growth will have to come to a very large extent from a growth in productivity of the land already being farmed. Only by using the best of modern technologies can the necessary productivity gains be achieved. Europe has a key role to play on developing and promoting a new approach. It would be a synergy of different methods like:

- Integrated pest management
- Plant breeding
- Crop rotations
- Optimum fertilisation
- Precision farming
- Advances in harvest and storage

In terms of crop protection, productive farming means limiting the losses from weeds, pests and diseases. Still on selected crops, the crop losses can be up to 28% for wheat, 31% for corn or even 40% for potatoes¹. An overall Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach would be the best sustainable solution. According to the FAO International code of conduct, Integrated Pest Management emphasises the growth of a healthy crop with the least disruption to agro-ecosystems

¹ E.-C. OERKE (2006). Crop losses to pests. *The Journal of Agricultural Science*, **144**, pp 31-43

and encourages natural pest control mechanisms. Pesticides are a core component of the IPM scheme and are complementary with techniques. For instance, pesticides are often necessary to “clean up” crops when the infestation is already severe or to prevent further crop damage before alternative techniques effectively suppresses the pest.

From an industry perspective, the current regulatory environment in Europe is driving more and more crop protection products off the market, restricting choices for growers, limiting the modes of action available, and putting not only minor crops production at risk. There is a risk of discouraging research and innovation with the introduction of legislations lacking a scientific basis. The risk of depletion of the pesticides tool basket goes against successful IPM development which requires diversity in chemical modes of action. The crop protection industry is committed to producing effective, safe products for the range of problems faced by growers today and in the future, and it is vital that European Union regulations encourage the necessary research and investment in such technologies. The development of “secondary regulations” with own product lists from supermarkets or food companies ignoring the EU and Member State legislations are also confusing for growers and consumers.

The challenges are global. The world needs to increase the available supplies of high quality and affordable food. It can be done by improving the productivity on the available farmland and by providing to farmers a wide variety of different tools. We need to use all available technologies and a sustainable use of pesticides is part of the solution.