



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP
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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
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1 February 2021

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 15 January on behalf of your constituents about an emergency authorisation for the limited use of a neonicotinoid seed treatment on the 2021 sugar beet crop.

The decision taken was informed by assessments and advice from the Health and Safety Executive, the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides and Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser. Having considered their comments and analysis in full, I have decided to grant an emergency authorisation in order to provide emergency protection against viruses which have significantly impacted yields of the 2020 sugar beet crop while the beet industry develops alternative solutions.

Emerging sugar beet seedlings are vulnerable to predation by aphids, which have the potential to spread Beet yellows virus. Sugar beet crops have been severely affected and 2020 yields are forecast to be down by 20-25% on previous years. Emergency authorisations for pesticides are only granted in exceptional circumstances where diseases or pests cannot be controlled by any other reasonable means.

Emergency authorisations are used by countries across Europe. Ten EU countries including Belgium, Denmark and Spain have granted emergency authorisations for neonicotinoid seed treatments since 2018. Under EU legislation Member States may grant emergency authorisations in exceptional circumstances. The UK's approach to the use of emergency authorisations has not changed as a result of the UK's exit from the EU.

This authorisation is for the use of Syngenta's Cruiser SB on the 2021 sugar beet crop for England only. The duration of authorisation is strictly limited to the period required to allow supply of the product. Sugar beet is a non-flowering crop that is only grown in the east of England.

Furthermore, this exceptional use of Syngenta's Cruiser SB will be strictly controlled. Conditions of the authorisation include reduced application rate as well as a prohibition on any flowering crop being planted in the same field where the product has been used within 22 months of sugar beet, and a prohibition on oilseed rape being planted within 32 months of sugar beet.

The UK is a world leader in developing greener farming practices and upholds the highest standards of environmental and health protection. The Government is currently consulting on the draft National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides which sets out the ambition to further minimise the risks and impacts of pesticides to human health and the environment. We are equally committed to protecting pollinators, and our National Pollinator Strategy sets out how the Government, conservation groups, farmers, beekeepers and researchers can work together to improve the status of pollinating insect species in England.

I hope this sets out the reasons for my decision. Please do let me know if you have any questions.



RT HON GEORGE EUSTICE MP