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Sumitomo Chemical Reiterates the Effectiveness and Safety of Clothianidin, an Active Ingredient in Some of its Crop Protection Products

On April 27, 2018, by a majority of votes, the European Commission adopted a regulation to restrict the use, to permanent greenhouses only, of three neonicotinoid insecticides, including Sumitomo Chemical's clothianidin.

This restriction is based on the result of risk assessment conducted by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), which, in doing so, has relied on its own Bee Risk Assessment Guidance Document to evaluate pesticide risks to bees in the EU. This regulatory document has not yet been adopted because a qualified majority of European Member States continues to oppose its use for the assessment, criticizing that it has overly conservative views on risks to bees and impractical requirements. By relying on a risk assessment result based on a guideline whose scientific soundness has been questioned by the Member States themselves, the European Commission's adoption of the regulation to restrict the use of these insecticides cannot avoid criticisms of being unscientific and inconsistent.

Yet, even based on such overly conservative views, the EFSA's report merely concludes that "the estimation of the environmental contamination was higher than the levels considered safe for bees, a high risk was concluded," and that "overall these neonicotinoids represent a risk to bees." This conclusion does not contradict the fact that the use and application of clothianidin in accordance with its label is safe for bee health, nor does it affect Sumitomo Chemical's opinion that clothianidin is not the main cause for mass deaths of bees or colony collapse disorder.

Clothianidin, as indicated by an abundance of scientific data, is more effective than conventional insecticides, as it can be applied to a broader spectrum of insects, and is safer to human health and the environment when used and applied properly. Sumitomo Chemical is concerned that this new limitation will prevent farmers from using a very effective and safe tool to safeguard efficient agricultural practices and the food supply in Europe, and it will continue its efforts to communicate with the relevant European authorities to improve the situation.

Sumitomo Chemical is fully committed to working with the EU authorities and other authorities around the world to provide sound scientific data and to take the necessary measures to further demonstrate the safety of its products.