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One step forward, two steps back

Reaction of Fertilizers Europe after the votes on the Fertilizer Regulation in the Agriculture and Environment Committees of the European parliament

The Agriculture Committee of the European Parliament, under the lead of its Rapporteur Mr. Jan Huitema (ALDE, the Netherlands), today acknowledged the need for the New Fertilizer Regulation to maintain Fertilizers as quality products. Fertilizers Europe very much welcomes the modifications adopted by a vast majority of the Agriculture Committee, like for instance the introduction of a clear definition for mineral fertilizers or the creation of requirements ensuring effective functioning and quality of this major input for farming in Europe. The Agriculture Committee wants to ensure that mineral fertilizers will in the future also continue to meet farmers' expectations.

Fertilizers Europe now counts on the Members of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection to listen to the views of their fellow colleagues from the agriculture side.

Although a few improvements were adopted, Fertilizers Europe is very disappointed by the results of the vote in the Environment Committee. Amendments put forward by the Rapporteur Mrs. Elisabetta Gardini (EPP, Italy) to improve the Commission proposal in a constructive way did not find a majority because of partisan politics. For instance, the compromise proposal put forward by the Rapporteur, introducing a unique cadmium limit of 60mg/kg P₂O₅, would have struck the right balance between the different concerns including health. Instead, the Environment Committee has chosen to go for radical limits and now pushes for an earlier adoption of a maximum limit of 20 mg/kg P₂O₅. This position, which is totally unacceptable, was developed without proper information on the feasibility. It puts at stake the capacity of Europe to keep a competitive mineral fertilizer sector and to provide farmers with affordable fertilizers.

"In order to feed ourselves, we have to feed the crops. Mineral fertilizers contribute to 50 % of global food production. By leaving the path of a balanced approach, the Environment Committee of the European Parliament undermines EU farmers' capacity to deliver enough high-quality food to feed Europe and beyond", Jacob Hansen (Director-General of Fertilizers Europe) stated after the votes.

The Environment Committee delivered a weak position on its exclusive competences since only a small majority backed the over-ambitious cadmium limits. Therefore, Fertilizers Europe strongly calls for this extreme position of the Environment Committee to be corrected at the level of the Plenary of the European Parliament in September 2017.

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