

IMPACT OF SUSTAINABLE USE REGULATION ON EUROPEAN TURF SPORTS SECTOR



◆ CropLife Europe acknowledges the willingness of the European Commission to provide more flexibility in the use of plant protection products in sensitive areas. Despite the effort to mitigate the expected impact on food security and the viability of rural areas as well as agricultural competitiveness in the EU, our sector maintains that the positions put forward by the Commission overlook the impact on the non-agricultural sector, namely the turf sports sectors in the EU.

◆ Greenkeepers that manage turf, such as football pitches and golf courses, are trained in proper stewardship practices and apply plant protection products PPPs only when, and if necessary. For professional pitches and courses, these areas are closed off and therefore not freely accessible to the general public including vulnerable groups.

◆ The data on this issue demonstrates that the current Commission proposal to ban the use of PPPs on turf is not feasible and will have significant socio-economic as well as health impacts.

The facts about the Proposed Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation for Turf

◆ Currently, there are not enough biopesticide and no low-risk alternatives available for turf sports uses. In addition, it currently takes between 5-7 years to bring a biopesticide to the market.

◆ New tools such as drift reducing nozzles or weed and disease detection technologies have not yet been developed or are not yet available on the market for greenkeepers to use.

◆ Developments and introduction of new grass seed varieties in order to reduce stress and disease on turf are not yet available to meet the current needs.

◆ The Commission proposes that Member States can apply for derogations. However this will not apply to the turf sports sector as the derogations can only be given in the case where quarantine pests are identified and there are no turf pests identified (in the quarantine list).



The potential impact of the proposed definition on sensitive areas

Agriculture and food production are the main focal areas of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (SUR) proposal, with an ambition to reduce the use and risk of pesticides to protect both human health and environment. However, there are big implications for European turf sports at both professional and especially grassroots levels, where the Commission has proposed to ban the use of all pesticides in these 'sensitive areas'. The findings of our study conducted in seven member states (FR, ES, IT, DE, SE, IE and CZ) demonstrates negative consequences for both professional and amateur turf sports which in turn puts sporting events at risk in the EU.

In the absence of playable golf surfaces, the sector would look to move their venues outside of the EU such as the UK, North Africa or Turkey where such strict regulatory turf management laws do not apply, consequently depriving many member states, especially southern MS of significant revenues, leading to significant socio-economic consequences due to the golf sector's link to tourism in these countries. In Spain alone, golf tourism attracts over 1.2 million tourists annually and generates over €11.8bn for the country's economy

As a result of difficulties in maintaining turf fields, it is expected that the number of sports facilities such as football pitches and golf courses will decline overtime. This in turn will have a detrimental effect on the health and social benefits associated with the practice of sports.



Recommendations

- ◆ Member states should have the ability to develop local risk management plans for turf management, including defining "freely accessible areas" in order to ensure that vulnerable populations are protected.
- ◆ Member states should also have the possibility to include quarantine pests for turf sports on the priority pest list in order to have the ability to apply for derogations when, and if necessary.
- ◆ Until non-chemical alternatives are developed and commercially available, European greenkeepers should still be able to use effective tools to tackle pests, weeds and diseases, be they biopesticides or approved conventional pesticides.
- ◆ An appropriate budget needs to be made available at EU level to facilitate the transition of greenkeepers using new technologies such as green on green sensors in order to optimise the use of PPPs only when, and if necessary.



CROPLIFE EUROPE, AISBL
9 RUE GUIMARD, 1040 BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
www.croplifeeurope.eu

