



**PAN Europe**  
Pesticides Action Network Europe



  
**Friends of  
the Earth  
Europe**

## Open letter

### Re: Environmental NGOs urge the Standing Committee to ban Hazardous Herbicide Paraquat

September 22, 2003

Dear Mrs/ Sir,

We, environmental organisations and movements of the European civil society, are calling on you to ensure that the hazardous herbicide paraquat will not be added to the positive list (Annex 1) of the 91/414/EC Pesticides Market Authorisation Directive at the next meeting of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health 2 – 3 October 2003.

Paraquat is one of the most controversial herbicides being used. Internationally, workers and farmers regularly exposed to the herbicide paraquat experience serious problems with their health. Paraquat is an extremely hazardous substance, which may cause severe and irreversible injuries in humans. The high toxicity and lack of antidote leads to serious ill-health, and even death, from exposure. Studies indicate that paraquat has adverse effects on hares and birds, and has even been shown to accumulate in soils.

The Commission is aware of the serious health and ecological effects of the herbicide paraquat but still proposes an inclusion to the positive list. However, several Member States have contested an inclusion and voting has been deferred four times (December 2002, February 2003, April 2003 and July 2003).

At the Council meeting of Environment Ministers in June the problems with the herbicide paraquat were raised by Denmark, Finland and Sweden which strongly urged other Member States to vote against a proposal for approval of paraquat when the Commission forwards such a proposal.

**New compiled information also starts to recognise a potential fatal link between the effects of paraquat exposure and development of Parkinson's disease. Although, more research is needed to explain the process, we call for adoption of the precautionary principle in order to maintain a high level of safety for human health<sup>1</sup>.**

We believe that the Commission, by proposing inclusion of known very toxic pesticides, discredits the pesticides risk management procedure and decreases public confidence.

**Considering the serious health and ecological concerns, combined with the loss of public confidence, we strongly urge you at the next meeting of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health (2 – 3 October 2003) to reject the inclusion of paraquat on the EU pesticides positive list.**

Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

John Hontelez, Secretary General of the European Environmental Bureau  
Carina Weber, Chair of Pesticides Action Network Europe  
Mikael Karlsson, President of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation  
Joanna Dober Sullivan, Food and Farming Campaigner, Friends of Earth Europe

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.pan-germany.org/download/fact\\_paraquat.pdf](http://www.pan-germany.org/download/fact_paraquat.pdf)