

## CROP PROTECTION INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

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### ABSTRACT

The Crop protection industry is committed to answer the challenges of the sustainable agriculture thanks to innovation and responsible use of crop protection solutions. Significant progress have been made regarding product profile and advice during the use phase for a sustainable use; Current EU regulation driven by hazard-based (versus risk management) and precautionary principle is putting agriculture at risk in terms of competitiveness.

**Key words:** food production, innovation, stewardship, regulatory burden

### IZVLEČEK

#### PRISPEVEK FITOFARMACEVSKE INDUSTRIJE K TRAJNOSTEMU KMETIJSTVU

Fitofarmacevska industrija si z inovacijami in postopki varne rabe fitofarmacevskih sredstev (v nadaljevanju FFS) prizadeva ponuditi odgovore na izzive trajnostnega kmetijstva. Pri izboru in postopkih varne rabe je dosežen velik napredek. Obstoječi postopki registracije FFS v EU, ki temeljijo na oceni nevarnosti in previdnostnih predpostavkah namesto na oceni tveganja, predstavljajo velik izziv za konkurenčnost kmetijske pridelave.

**Ključne besede:** kmetijska pridelava, inovacije, podpora uporabnikom

Farmers and agri food-chain actors provide Europe with plentiful supply of safe, healthy and affordable food. Consumers, accustomed to the ready availability of food are often unaware of the enormous challenges facing agriculture.

Food production will need to increase by around 70% to satisfy the demands of a population which is expected to grow by more than a third (2.3 billion more people) between 2009 and 2050.

The EU is a major contributor to global food security and a key player in efforts to reach the millennium goals on combating hunger. However, society's demands on agriculture don't stop at food-supply; the sector is expected to contribute to economic prosperity, support the social wellbeing of rural areas and help preserve natural resources including biodiversity.

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Crop protection products (pesticides) have a key role to play to reach those objectives, but they are perhaps one of the most misunderstood technologies used in modern agriculture. On many uses, there are currently no viable alternatives to chemical crop protection, and in spite of frequent misinformation, we need to remember that when the product is used correctly, pesticides offer safe and effective protection for both conventional and organic crops.

The crop protection industry invests a close to 8% of sales in Europe in new product development. There is a constant drive to deliver better solutions on the market, these include: better profiles for chemical substances, biocontrol solutions, services including decision-making tools, new varieties for members involved in seed breeding and research. Significant achievements have been made. Today's chemical solutions are more targeted on the actual problem of pest, disease or weeds and are at the same time more environmentally and human friendly.

Policy makers should embrace science and innovation, and pursue smart policies that ensure appropriate balance between economic, social and environmental needs. These are timely considerations as the European Commission conducts fitness checks on important regulation, in particular those specific to the crop protection sector.

The current regulation (EC) 1107/2009 is not working and innovation is at risk, limiting the farmer's toolbox and as a consequence crop productivity can decline, which will put EU competitiveness in danger. We are calling for an approach based on benefit/risk analysis and considerations.

In spite of this difficult context, the crop protection industry is committed to pursue the efforts regarding the promotion of good practices along the product life cycle and the **Hungry for Change initiative** involves many actors, including farmers, in the areas of food quality production, water, health and biodiversity protection.

Among the current running projects the **Container Management System** initiative is a key one: Empty containers for crop protection products can pose a significant source of waste, and even more can add to environmental contamination. In European countries where no official collection system are established yet, industry along with private partners and authorities try to develop such a recycling scheme.

Industry aims for more than 70% recollection rate all over Europe to establish a cleaning concept on farm level (triple rinsing).

**SUI**, the Safe and Sustainable Use Initiative is a program designed to provide farmers and operators with an easy to use toolbox to successfully increase crop protection user and environment safety by sharing best practices with farmers and providing them with some functional and practical solutions when handling pesticides.

This initiative is a Pan-European coordinated effort with a strong local approach taking into account local conditions, circumstances and national laws and requirements. Today in each of the 17 countries<sup>1</sup> the project is coordinated in partnership.

The **TOPPS projects** ([www.topps-life.org](http://www.topps-life.org)) are an ECPA initiative to reduce losses of Plant Protection Products (PPP) to water, which began with an EU Life programme co-funded project. TOPPS stands for Train Operators and promote best Practices &

Sustainability. Project work is carried out with the support of local partners and associations in EU countries.

The TOPPS concept is to develop and disseminate commonly agreed Best Management Practices (BMPs) aimed at reducing or eliminating water contamination by PPPs. TOPPS provides risk diagnosis tools, a toolbox of mitigation measures and BMP recommendations. By means of active dissemination through the TOPPS partner network we try to gather support for widespread BMP adoption and implementation throughout of EU (e.g. by referencing TOPPS -BMPs in official national water stewardship recommendations and trainings, National Action Plans, Water Framework Directive Basin Management Plans, etc.)

We all recognize the paramount importance of safeguarding human health and the environment, and the need for all parties to continue to work together to find safe, sustainable and effective solutions to pest problems. IPM (Integrated Pest management) implementation will contribute to that objective.