

EU plans new bid to protect bees

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A man in Berne last month. wears a T-shirt reading in French "Protect our bees". The European Commission says it will try again to get member states to back a two-year ban on insecticides harmful to bees whose numbers have been in sharp and worrying decline.

The European Commission said Tuesday it will try again to get member states to back a two-year ban on insecticides harmful to bees whose numbers have been in sharp and worrying decline.

EU Health Commissioner Tonio Borg told EU agriculture ministers

meeting in Brussels that he wanted to revisit the issue after the measure failed to get enough votes from national experts on a committee.

"The Commission still envisages to have measures in place" by July 1, Borg's spokesman said, adding that the issue will now go to an appeal committee after further discussions.

The Commission wants the insecticides banned for use on four major crops—maize (corn), rape seed, sunflowers and cotton—in a bid to prevent a disastrous collapse in the [bee population](#).

Experts have isolated three compounds causing concern—clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam, known as [neonicotinoids](#)—which are present in insecticides produced by pharmaceutical giants Bayer, Syngenta and Cruiser OSR.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) said in a recent report that the [insecticides](#) posed "disturbing" risks to bees and other [pollinating insects](#) vital for human food production.

Swiss-based agrichemical giant Syngenta last month urged Brussels to withdraw the plan, saying the EFSA report was "fundamentally flawed".

Borg's spokesman said that with the plan under consideration since May 2012 and the EFSA report to hand, "the time is ripe to act".

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