

EU targets harmful chemicals after two year delay

June 15 2016



Harmful chemicals known as endocrine disruptors are potentially found in a huge variety of products, including pesticides

European Union regulators on Wednesday set criteria for identifying harmful chemicals used in everyday products, but more than two years late after a fierce debate with lobbyists and activists.

The issue is highly sensitive one as EU law states that any product

judged to contain these chemicals, known as endocrine disruptors, will have to be withdrawn from the market.

These chemicals are potentially found in a huge variety of everyday products, including disinfectants, pesticides and toiletries.

"The Commission is committed to ensuring the highest level of protection of both human health and the environment, which is why we are today putting forward strict criteria for endocrine disruptors - based on science," European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker said in a statement.

In 2012, the World Health Organization sounded an alarm over [endocrine disruptors](#), linking them to cancerous tumours, birth defects, and other developmental disorders.

EU rules in 2013 targeted suspected disruptors and the commission, the bloc's executive, agreed to define the criteria for identifying them that year.

But the sensitive decision was delayed by demands by worried chemicals companies for more research.

The delay became so long that in December, Europe's second-highest court found the commission had broken EU law by still failing to set out the criteria.

European health and environment groups said the Commission's criteria contained dangerous loopholes and that the EU had bowed to pressure from the [chemical](#) industry.

But a group representing chemicals giants such as Germany's Bayer and US group Dow Chemical also slammed the decision.

"We are extremely disappointed with this proposal from the European Commission," the European Crop Protection Association said in an email to AFP.

The group has warned that if too strict, the EU could encourage the spread of crop diseases and reduce yields by as much as 50 percent.

The commission's proposal will now be negotiated by the European Parliament and with ministers from the EU's 28 member states.

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Citation: EU targets harmful chemicals after two year delay (2016, June 15) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-06-eu-chemicals-year.html>

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