BTO 10/07/2017 – Meeting between Commissioner Andriukaitis and representatives of Bayer and Syngenta

Participants:
- Commissioner Andriukaitis, Nahtalie Chaze (Cabinet), (SANTE)
- Bayer:
- Syngenta:

The meeting took place on request of Bayer and Syngenta to discuss their concerns about the impact of the Commission’s interpretation of regulations governing the agro-chemical sector in the EU, in particular related to endocrine disruptors, neonicotinoids and import tolerances.

The Commissioner opened the meeting by underlining that EFSA’s scientific opinions are the basis for the Commission’s proposals, not political considerations. He emphasised that the Pesticides Regulation sets a clear framework with strict protection goals, which the Commission diligently respects. The Commission’s proposals are not swayed by the preferences of industry or NGOs. He noted that public opinion is very fearful of pesticides and that in the Standing Committee, Member States abstain more and more often, thus not taking responsibility to defend science. The Commission thus finds itself in a difficult position and is heavily criticised in the media, by stakeholders and by the European Parliament. He invited industry to be open to more transparency and public scrutiny, in particular by publishing the studies underlying applications for approval of active substances and involving NGOs in reviewing them from the beginning. As to the particular case of industry’s position on the ED criteria, he underlined that the scientific advice to the Commission was not to include potency – the Commission then followed this advice in its proposal, and referred to the Commission’s commitment to re-table the proposal for amending the derogation possibility once the criteria are adopted.

The industry representatives recognised that public opinion is very negative and that a broader discussion with all stakeholders (including NGOs) is necessary as regards the role of pesticides in agriculture and to find common ground on what is sustainable agriculture. The Commissioner emphasised the role of the Sustainable Use Directive in this context, in particular the fostering of integrated pest management, the need for more innovation to find low-risk substances, and the need to find advocates who can change public opinion.

The industry representatives repeated their well-known concerns regarding the workability of EFSA’s bee guidance document and the resulting restrictions on the use of neonicotinoids for the treatment seeds. The Commissioner declined to comment, referring to the ongoing Court Case.

The industry representatives expressed their views regarding the need to conduct risk assessments for the setting of MRLs also for substances that are not approved in the EU due to their meeting the cut-off criteria in the pesticides Regulation and cautioned against setting too low MRLs as this would favour the development of mycotoxins. The Commissioner explained that if substances meet the cut-off criteria, accepting MRLs higher than the limit of detection would constitute unacceptable risks to human health.