

EN
E-000203/2025
Answer given by Mr Várhelyi
on behalf of the European Commission
(28.5.2025)

Regulation (EU) 2018/785¹ banned all outdoor uses of plant protection products (PPP) containing thiamethoxam because of unacceptable impacts on bees. Thereafter, the applicant for the renewal of approval of thiamethoxam withdrew its application and the approval expired in 2019.

Regulation (EU) 2023/334² lowered all Maximum Residue Levels for thiamethoxam to the technical zero³, considering the impact on bees, which is an environmental concern of global nature. These levels also apply to products imported into the EU.

Decisions on the approval of active substances are always based on a scientific assessment of potential effects on human health or the environment, the consideration of other legitimate factors and the precautionary principle, in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009⁴ which does not explicitly include socio-economic factors⁵. As set out in its Vision for Agriculture and Food⁶, the Commission will carefully consider any further ban of pesticides if alternatives are not yet available, unless the pesticide in question represents a threat to human health or to the environment that agriculture relies on for its viability.

Member States can grant emergency authorisations for PPP containing non-approved active substances, if these are necessary to combat a danger to plants that cannot be controlled by other reasonable means.

The Common Agricultural Policy supports farmers with, e.g., investments, research, production methods, replanting of orchards after mandatory grubbing. If phytosanitary measures require restriction of movement of fruits/vegetables within the EU, exceptional supporting market measures can be adopted. Horizon Europe⁷ prioritises plant health research and innovation⁸ under its cluster 6⁹.

¹ http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2018/785/oj.

² Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/334 of 2 February 2023 amending Annexes II and V to Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards maximum residue levels for clothianidin and thiamethoxam in or on certain products. *OJ L 47*, 15.2.2023, p. 29–45.

³ Technical zero is the limit of determination.

⁴ Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market and repealing Council Directives 79/117/EEC and 91/414/EEC (*OJ L 309*, 24.11.2009, p. 1).

⁵ Recital 24 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009: *‘The provisions governing authorisation must ensure a high standard of protection. In particular, when granting authorisations of plant protection products, the objective of protecting human and animal health and the environment should take priority over the objective of improving plant production. Therefore, it should be demonstrated, before plant protection products are placed on the market, that they present a clear benefit for plant production and do not have any harmful effect on human or animal health, including that of vulnerable groups, or any unacceptable effects on the environment’*.

⁶ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the committee of the Regions. A Vision for Agriculture and Food Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations. COM/2025/75.

⁷ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en.

⁸ AgriFactsheet on Plant Health: <https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/e8a5772e-9fca-4583->

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⁹ <https://circular-cities-and-regions.ec.europa.eu/support-materials/funding-and-financing/horizon-europe-cluster-6-food-bioeconomy-natural-resources>.