

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000131/26
to the Commission**

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(14 January 2026)

Subject: European cereal growers' ability to control key weeds

European cereal growers are increasingly struggling to control grassy weeds such as blackgrass. Rising resistance and the loss of effective herbicides limit available options. As blackgrass produces large amounts of seed, farmers need high levels of control, yet mechanical measures like ploughing often prove to be insufficient in preventing their emergence the following season. If left unmanaged, these weeds can cause major yield losses, threatening economic viability and security of supply.

In March 2025, the primary herbicide for controlling blackgrass received a non-renewal decision. Therefore, considering the grace periods, farmers may already lack effective control solutions in 2026. The seriousness of the situation was highlighted by French agriculture minister Annie Genevard, who promised full use of the grace period due to the lack of alternatives currently available.

Meanwhile, the UK registered two innovative herbicides in 2022 and 2024, one of which is available to farmers. Both products were submitted for approval in the EU and the UK in 2018. Although the UK still applies the same approval criteria, its process has advanced much faster than that in the EU.

1. When can EU farmers expect access to these innovative products?
2. What are the reasons behind the delays in the EU system, and how will the Commission improve the functioning of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 ⁽¹⁾ to accelerate access to innovation?

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Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(23 March 2026)

The initial approval and the renewal of approval of active substances is granted if they comply with the strict approval criteria established under Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 ⁽¹⁾ following a thorough risk assessment carried out by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

The Commission will finalise the procedure for the approval of the new herbicidal active substance bixlozone in the coming months.

EFSA completed the risk assessment for another herbicidal active substance, cinmethylin, in January 2026 and the discussions with the Member States on a decision for its approval have started. Both bixlozone and cinmethylin are effective for control of blackgrass weeds.

The delays in the procedures for the initial approval of active substances are mainly due to the high complexity of the required scientific assessments and the fact that the Member States have to dedicate the vast majority of their resources to the large number of procedures for the renewal of approval of active substances already approved in the past.

This is because of the current legal requirement that all approvals are limited in time and must be renewed. To overcome this problem, and to increase the availability of safe and effective new active substances, the Commission proposed in the recently adopted Food and Feed Simplification Package ⁽²⁾ to replace the current systematic time-driven renewal system, with a more agile approach that, if adopted, will reduce the burden of the renewal procedures and will free capacity in the Member States to allow faster evaluation of applications for the approval of new active substances, including biocontrol active substances as alternative to more hazardous chemical ones.

¹ OJ L 309, 24.11.2009, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/1107/oj>.

⁽¹⁾ 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, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/1107/oj>.

⁽²⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/simplification-legislation_en.