

European Parliament passes bill banning most dangerous pesticides

By **CONSTANT BRAND**, Associated Press

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STRASBOURG, France - The European Parliament voted Tuesday to tighten rules on the use of pesticides amid fears it is posing an increasing danger to human health and animals like the industrious honeybee.

EU lawmakers approved two laws on licensing and use that will ban the most dangerous, cancer-causing pesticides across the 27-nation bloc.

"Today's decision is a milestone for consumer protection in Europe," German Green Party lawmaker Hiltrud Breyer said.

The rules will force farmers and chemical producers to replace 22 high toxic products, deemed to be the most dangerous pesticides, over the next decade.

The system is expected to come into force in the coming weeks, after a final, formal nod from EU governments. It will restrict the use of pesticides in and around parks, urban areas, reserves and protected wetlands and limit the use of crop-dusters.

Threatened wild and farm honeybees were also given attention in the new legislation.

Substances deemed to be harmful to nature's largest pollinators will be banned in an attempt to reverse the recent dramatic decrease of bee populations across Europe and other continents.

Many scientists believe the increased use of pesticides is a factor in the worldwide decline of bees.

The Pesticide Action Network-Europe alliance said bees are essential for the pollination of some 80 million tons of food produced in the EU.

The European Commission said pesticides can cause cancer, are toxic to reproductive systems and can disrupt hormones.

Environmental group Greenpeace said lobbying from the chemicals industry had dulled the edge of the legislation. It said the EU should have imposed an immediate ban rather than a 10-year phase out of the most toxic pesticides.

"Banning 22 harmful substances out of over 400 is barely a start," said Manfred Krautter of Greenpeace. "Food in Europe will continue to be contaminated by many dangerous chemicals for years to come."

Some British lawmakers were also critical, saying it would lead to further food price hikes because farmers could ill afford to use alternative and more expensive pesticides.