



Bumblebees under Threat of Extinction as Deadly Pesticide Approved For Use in England

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A deadly pesticide which is harmful to bees and banned in the EU could be used in England this year.

Environment Secretary George Eustice has agreed to the pesticide - which contains neonicotinoid thiamethoxam - to be used on sugar beet this year. The decision has been made to protect the plant from a virus - yellows disease - which significantly reduced crop yields last year.

The pesticide has been authorized for up to 120 days following appeals from British Sugar and the National Farmers Union.

But the decision has attracted fury from both environmentalists and members of the public, considering a third of the UK bee population is thought to have disappeared in the last decade.

Many believe the government should be doing everything in its power to help reverse the biodiversity crisis, something this decision appears to contradict.

Research suggests the toxic ingredient in the pesticide can harm bee development, weaken their immune systems and disable the bees from being able to fly.

Tweeting about the decision, The Wildlife Trusts said: "Bad news for bees: The government has bowed to pressure from the National Farmers Union to agree the use of a highly damaging pesticide. "The government knows the clear harm that neonicotinoid pesticides cause to bees and other pollinators and just three years ago supported restrictions on them across the European Union.

"Insects perform vital roles such as pollination of crops and wildflowers, and nutrient recycling, but so many have suffered drastic declines. Evidence suggests we've lost at least 50 per cent of insects since 1970, and 41 per cent of all insect species are now 'threatened with extinction'. "Neonicotinoids pose a significant environmental risk - particularly to our bees and other pollinators - and over the last decade hundreds of thousands of people across the UK have called for better protection of our bees, and for these highly toxic pesticides to be banned."

Meanwhile, National Farmers Union sugar board chairman Michael Sly has also commented on the decision.

"Virus yellows disease is having an unprecedented impact on Britain's sugar beet crop, with some growers experiencing yield losses of up to 80 per cent, and this authorization is desperately needed to fight this disease. It will be crucial in ensuring that Britain's sugar beet growers continue to have viable farm businesses," he said.

A Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs spokesperson added that the emergency authorizations are only granted in "exceptional circumstances".

"Pesticides can only be used where we judge there to be no harm to human health and animal health, and no unacceptable risks to the environment. The temporary use of this product is strictly limited to a non-flowering crop and will be tightly controlled to minimize any potential risk to pollinators," they said.