



PRESS RELEASE

Nature wins despite MEP apathy

Nicosia, 16 June 2017

Today nature won over pesticides...but by default. By not reaching the required majority to approve the blocking resolution by AGRI Committee members Mr. Dess (EPP, DE) and Mr. Agnew (EFDD, UK), the European Parliament automatically supported the European Commission's delegated act that proposes to ban the use of pesticides in Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs). EFAs are areas where farmers are paid to leave important space for nature in an intensively farmed landscape.

EFAs were introduced as part of the 2013 greening reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Every farmer in the European Union who claims a direct payment from the CAP and has more than 15 hectares of arable land is obliged to have 5% of his arable land covered by EFAs to safeguard and improve biodiversity on farms.

However studies show that EFA measures have failed to protect biodiversity on farms, partly because of the use of pesticides in these areas. With this delegated act the European Commission wants to make things right and give EFA measures a chance to function as intended.

Intensive agriculture and continued abandonment of valuable farmland, directly and indirectly supported by different CAP measures, are driving climatic and environmental destruction, wiping out wildlife and harming public health. Over 250,000 Europeans participated in the European Commission's public consultation calling for a radical reform of the CAP through the Living Land campaign.

Martin Hellicar, BirdLife Cyprus Director said: *"Thanks to democratic safeguards, nature won the vote, despite general MEP apathy. Thanks goes to those sensible MEPs – including some from Cyprus – who voted against pesticides, but it is deeply disappointing to see so many MEPs voting in favour of pesticides in EFAs. This raises huge questions about the future process of CAP reform"*

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Notes to editors:

1. To reach majority you need 367 votes and today only 363 MEP votes YES to the resolution and 267 voted NO. Thereby the resolution wasn't adopted and the Commission's delegated act went through.

2. A report last year by the IEEP, concluded that the performance of 'Ecological Focus Areas' could be considerably improved by banning the use of pesticides. For the report itself, click [here](#). For BirdLife Europe and Central Asia's media briefing on this report, click [here](#).

3. [BirdLife Europe and Central Asia](#) is a partnership of 48 national conservation organisations and a leader in bird conservation. Through its unique local to global approach BirdLife Europe delivers high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people. BirdLife Europe and Central Asia is one of the six regional secretariats that compose BirdLife International.

4. Living Land is a campaign that rallied over 250,000 Europeans to call on the EU Commission to radically reform EU agriculture. For more information, click [here](#).