**PRESS RELEASE**

**The EU Minor Uses Coordination Facility has started!**

On 1st September Mr Jeroen Meeussen started work as coordinator for the new EU Minor Uses Coordination Facility. Minor uses of pesticides are uses on niche crops with a high economic value for farmers, but usually of low economic interest for the agro-pesticide industry. The mission of the Facility is 'to enable farmers in the EU to produce high quality crops by filling minor uses gaps through efficient collaboration to improve availability of chemical and non-chemical tools within an integrated pest management (IPM) framework’. Speaking from his office in Paris, Jeroen says “I am looking forward to the challenge of improving the co-ordination between countries, grower organisations and industry in developing solutions for minor uses. One of my priorities will be to liaise with applicants, growers, Member States and other relevant stakeholders. I will also be drawing on experience from other minor use projects around the globe”.

Jointly funded, initially, by the EU and the governments of France, Germany and the Netherlands, the Facility is hosted by the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO) in Paris. Its work will be overseen by a Steering Group representing all of the funders. The representatives of the governments of France, Germany and the Netherlands welcomed the creation of the Facility: “We believe that only through effective collaboration between countries the problems of minor uses can be addressed. That is why our governments have been willing to contribute to the costs of getting the Facility established.”

The EU has committed to provide 50% of the costs of this Facility for the first three years. The work of the Facility will benefit growers in all Member States, and one of its tasks will be to develop a sustainable funding model for continuing the work in the longer term. All Member States and stakeholders will need to play a role in securing its future.

Copa-Cogeca, the European farmers and agri-cooperatives organisation, has welcomed the news of the establishment of the Facility. Mr Luc Peeters, chairman of the Copa-Cogeca working party on phytosanitary questions said: “We have been drawing attention to the problems faced by our sector for many years, and are pleased that there is now a Facility to improve the co-ordination of efforts to address those problems. We look forward to working with the Facility. The proof of its success will be seen in terms of practical solutions available to growers.”

Mr Martin Ward, Director General of EPPO explained the role of his organisation. “We have been working with our member countries on co-ordination of plant protection for over 60 years, including action to address the minor uses question. We were pleased to respond positively when some of our members asked us to consider hosting this new Coordination Facility and will be keen to work with Jeroen to ensure its success.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

Because of the extensive data packages required for authorization to market plant protection products, growers face increasing difficulties in gaining authorization for “minor uses”. These are uses on more specialist crops or against pest problems which are not routinely encountered but may on occasion be very damaging. Although termed “minor uses” the problems of lack of availability of controls affect crops worth 70 billion Euros per year across the EU.

The European Commission has recently agreed to fund an additional programme of action to address the problem in a more coherent way by establishing a Minor Uses Coordination Facility. (REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL on the establishment of a European fund for minor uses in the field of plant protection products, Brussels, 18.2.2014 COM(2014) 82 final). France, Germany and the Netherlands have all agreed to contribute funding to establish the Facility for three years initially. A Steering Group representing all of the funders agreed the proposal to create the Facility, hosted by the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO).

The main task of the Coordination Facility will be to address gaps in pest and disease control measures available for so called 'minor crops' and for minor pests on other crops for farmers as well as for gardeners. It is emphasized that the Facility will coordinate and support minor use work among all Member States. Furthermore it is envisaged that the cooperation between the Coordination Facility and the ERANET on Integrated Pest Management (IPM ERANET) will result in more tools – chemical as well as non-chemical – becoming available for farmers in the field of pest and disease control.

For the last five years Jeroen Meeussen has been working in Brussels for the European Commission on pesticide issues, including ‘minor uses’. Before that he worked as the EU coordinator for plant protection products for the Netherlands. With a degree in plant pathology and an experience of more than 25 years in the area of regulatory issues for plant protection products Jeroen has an excellent understanding of what is going on in the field of crop protection, and is well placed to tackle the issue of ‘minor’ uses which, as he says, is of ‘major’ significance in agricultural production.

Within the EU Jeroen facilitated the registration of biopesticides and since 2005 he chairs the Biopesticides Steering Group (BPSG) as part of the Pesticide Programme of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization is an intergovernmental organisation founded in 1951 and is recognised as the Regional Plant Protection Organisation for Europe. It has an existing programme of work developing Standards for evaluating the efficacy of plant protection products. More details are at www.eppo.int.

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