



Report of the Third Stakeholder Advisory Forum

26 February 2019, Brussels

The Third Stakeholder Advisory Forum of the EU Minor Uses Coordination Facility (MUCF) took place on 26 February 2019 in Brussels. **Mr Jan Waespe**, representative of Switzerland and member of the Minor Uses Steering Group, opened the Stakeholder Advisory Forum and welcomed the participants. The event was, as in previous years, well attended with 38 stakeholders from a wide range of Member States and organizations.

Mr Jeroen Meeussen from the MUCF presented the main achievements since early 2018 and provided feedback from the Annual General Meeting (AGM). He explained the new governance structure of the MUCF. The governing body, comprising all funding countries, will meet once a year for the 'Annual General Meeting' and this year preceded the Stakeholder Advisory Forum. The role of the AGM will be to approve the budget and financial statement, as well as the work plan and budget. The Steering Group comprises representatives from Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland and will supervise and support the work of the Coordination Facility. The work of the MUCF is supported by Commodity Expert Groups and by the Horizontal Expert Group.

Major point of discussion at the AGM was the long-term funding of the Coordination Facility and how the Coordination Facility can become a financially sustainable organization. Lack of funding will have serious consequences for the MUCF and for the minor use work in all Member States. At the present time, the funding from Member States is insufficient to cover the current expenditure of the MUCF. Contributions from third parties may be considered, but with caution to avoid any conflict of interest.

Mr Jeroen Meeussen informed the participants about the findings in the Ecorys report, prepared in the framework of the REFIT¹. This report welcomes the establishment of the MUCF, notes the lack of clarity regarding the rules for authorisation and of harmonisation between Member States, and emphasizes the need for a broader acceptance of non-EU residue trials. The PEST Committee calls in its report for a harmonised definition of 'minor use' in order to promote a level playing field and recommends creating a single EU list of major crops. Most of these topics will be clarified in the Guidance Document on Minor Uses that is in preparation. It is the intention of the MUCF that the Guidance Document will be adopted by the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed.

The EU Minor Uses Data base (EUMUDA) is an important tool for the work on minor uses. It contains a list of minor uses needs and priorities of 25 EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland. A survey to update this list will be conducted once a year. Early April countries

¹ The REFIT programme (Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme) is organised by the European Commission to see if existing legislation is (still) fit for purpose, and to improve existing EU legislation.
https://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/pesticides/refit_en

will be approached with a request to update the list of their minor uses needs and priorities. In autumn 2019 the new list will be published on EUMUDA.

The Executive Director of IR-4, **Mr Jerry Baron**, introduced the minor use programme in the US. The IR-4 project is a US government funded research programme, facilitating the regulatory approval of sustainable pest management technology for specialty crops and specialty uses to promote public well-being. Specialty crops are divided into Food crops (fruits, vegetables, nuts, herbs, spices) and non-food Environmental Horticulture crops. A 'minor use need' is defined as a pesticide use where the use is so limited that commercial development would be unprofitable (less than 300 000 acres).

The IR-4 project consists of different programmes: (i) the Food Programme mainly dealing with Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs), crop grouping, and international harmonization of MRLs, (ii) the Environmental Horticulture Programme focussing on efficacy, crop safety and invasive species, and (iii) the Biopesticide and Organic Support Programme.

A MRL is the highest level of residue expected to be on a crop, if the plant protection product is used according to the label. **Mr Jerry Baron** emphasized that MRLs are trade standards and not safety limits although MRLs are often perceived like this. As many trading partners create or modify MRLs the complexity of moving commodities through global markets is increasing. A global residue study on blueberries was presented demonstrating that geographic zones have no impact on the residue levels. This should allow to use data from other countries and to create more robust data sets, ultimately with the goal to establish global MRLs. The EU considered these findings as "interesting and worthwhile to be further explored in the long term and at international level".

The first Global Minor Use Summit (GMUS) was held in 2007 in Rome and called upon global work sharing and harmonization. The first GMUS was followed by similar international events in 2012 and 2017 respectively. The cooperation between US and Canada is a good example of work sharing and has led to numerous registrations for minor uses. IR-4 is willing to share existing data, also with the EU, as long as the use is registered in the US. The goal of IR-4's global activities is to develop a global network of capable minor use programmes working together to solve the minor use problem. In that respect they very much welcome the establishment of the MUCF in the EU. A Global Minor Use Foundation has been created to stimulate and promote data generation and capacity building (e.g. training).

Ms Paula de Vera indicated that the mission of Copa-Cogeca is to ensure a viable, innovative, competitive EU agriculture and agri-food sector guaranteeing food security to half a billion people throughout Europe. Copa-Cogeca is the Association of European farmers and agri-cooperatives and part of the Agri-Food Chain Round Table on Plant Protection. EU farmers are a major producer of speciality crops and in the EU there is no common policy to support this important niche market. Therefore Copa-Cogeca is very supportive to the work of the MUCF. **Ms Paula de Vera** encouraged the European Commission to continue the funding of the MUCF. Although initially funded by DG SANTE also DG AGRI could play an important role in a sustainable funding because the pressure on the availability of plant protection products is expected to remain.

Mr Laurent Oger from ECPA presented the view from the European Crop Protection Association on Minor Uses and the current challenges. There is an increasing pressure on pesticide in general: revision of the pesticide regulation, glyphosate, neonicotinoids, scientific conservatism, involvement from the European Parliament (PEST Committee), etc. The trend is

an increasing number of non-approvals and non-renewals. In addition, the impact of the application of the cut-off criteria is uncertain. Guidance Documents start to become increasingly complex. Increasing scientific conservatism will hinder support for major uses and even more for minor uses. The high number of emergency authorisations, especially in the Southern zone, illustrates how difficult it is to solve minor uses issues properly.

One of the hurdles resulting in a lack of crop protection solutions for minor uses are the registration costs. A case example of *Pythium* control in carrots illustrated the non-viability of a minor use application as it is difficult to justify the investment compared to the limited market potential.

According to Article 51 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 a registration on a major crop can be extended to a minor crop. The current data requirements require still 4 residue trials, no efficacy data and the liability on crop damage is with the end user. In addition, it takes two years to establish a community MRL. ECPA calls on a simplified procedure for faster registration of solutions for minor uses.

To meet farmers' needs for a broad availability of crop protection solutions it is crucial that growers identify their priorities and communicate these at an early stage to industry. The MUCF already plays an important role in this and is recognized as essential by industry. The actions taken by MUCF over the last 3 years are allowing greater collaboration and practical solutions to be found.

Regarding the lack of funding ECPA calls for an EU fund for minor uses (as is stipulated in Article 51 (9) of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009).

Panel discussion

In the second part of the afternoon a panel discussion was held. Panel members were **Ms Eline Rademakers** (DG SANTE), **Ms Bronislava Skarbova** (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Slovakia), **Mr Philippe Bernard** (Freshfel), **Mr Jerry Baron** (Executive Director IR-4), **Ms Dominique Kreul** (Syngenta) and **Mr Ulf Heilig** (IBMA, International Biocontrol Manufacturers Association). The moderator of the panel discussion was **Mr Hans Mattaar** (Technical Director of ECCA, the European Crop Care Association).

The focus in the panel discussion was on the following two questions/topics:

- Growers of speciality crops do not have enough alternatives in their toolbox, for industry it is too expensive (or not a priority) to bring solutions for minor uses to the market, and regulatory authorities struggle with insufficiently clear rules for the authorisation of minor uses. How can the role of the different stakeholders be brought together, to create a level playing field for EU growers of speciality crops?
- In the REFIT report and in the conclusions of the PEST Committee several points are listed that are related to 'minor uses' (e.g. lack of clarity regarding rules for authorisation, definition of 'minor use' being insufficiently clear). How should these points be taken forward to create a more streamlined process for the authorisation of 'minor uses'?

All panel members shortly introduced themselves and indicated how minor uses are involved in their day-to-day work.

Ms Eline Rademakers explained again the position from DG SANTE that a grant was made available for the first three years to get the MUCF started and that the Member States are now responsible for the continuation of the MUCF on the longer term. **Ms Bronislava Skarbova** highlighted the numerous applications for emergency authorisations illustrating the need for solutions for minor uses. **Mr Philippe Bernard** indicated that in the current regulatory framework there is a disadvantage for EU growers of speciality crops. Whilst farmers in one country may have access to a complete range of authorised plant protection products, their neighbours a few kilometres away in another country, may have no authorised plant protection products options available. He promoted more harmonization between Member States thus creating a level playing field for EU growers of speciality crops. **Mr Jerry Baron** highlighted that cooperation between global minor uses programmes is the key to success. IR-4 has ongoing discussions with Brazil and Australia in setting up their minor uses programmes. **Ms Dominique Kreul** indicated that the complexity of the authorisation process hindered the availability of sufficient authorisations (regulatory hurdles, different zones and data requirements etc.). Syngenta is actively cooperating in minor uses projects. **Mr Ulf Heilig** introduced IMBA by indicating that most of their members are SMEs and bring biocontrol products to the market with in general a low impact on human and animal health and on the environment.

Regarding the outcome of the Global Residue Data Exchangeability Project (as presented by **Mr Jerry Baron**) and the proposal to have in the EU only one residue zone **Ms Eline Rademakers** indicated that this can be taken up in the REFIT process.

The panel suggested that Member States can simplify the process by setting a more streamlined process and reduced fees for minor use applications. Good communication between growers' groups regarding the planning of residue trials is considered essential. Widescale use of mutual recognition to provide farmers with the necessary tools is considered another prerequisite for a simplified process.

The panel made a few suggestions how industry can be motivated to apply for minor uses. It is important that growers liaise with companies who then can help clarifying some elements in the application. It is crucial is to have a clear indication of the minor uses needs and an overview of the available plant protection products in other Member States. The MUCF can play an important role in this, especially as long as PPPAMS, which is the EU Plant Protection Products Application Management System, is not yet fully operational. Another incentive can be found in extended data protection on the major use. This is already operational in both the US and the EU. Another possibility is to charge a fee for every application for a new active substance to be allocated to fund minor uses.

Regarding biocontrol products IBMA indicated to be in favour of a fast track procedure for low-risk products, to consider the EU as one single zone for biocontrol products and data requirements should be adapted for biocontrol products. IBMA released a white paper with their vision on how to improve regulation in the European Union for Bioprotection Agents.

To create a more streamlined process for the authorisation of 'minor uses' can only be achieved with clear support from Member States at political level. As **Mr Hans Mattaar** summarized: *"Where there is a will, there is a way"*.

The concluding remarks were presented by **Mr Jan Waespe**. He highlighted that the MUCF has made a lot of progress. The experience gained so far in the EU, but also with similar organizations such as IR-4 in the US, has shown that finding solutions for plant protection problems for specialty crops requires continuous structural funding. He indicated that it may need to be explored to open funding to stakeholders who are benefiting from the work of the MUCF. He thanked the moderator, the panel members, the presenters and all participants for the exchange of views and fruitful discussions.

20 March 2019