

Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP
2 Marsham Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 4DF

Thursday 22nd December 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

Re: Application for emergency authorisation of thiamethoxam on sugar beet in 2023

On behalf of our organisations, congratulations on the signing of the new Global Biodiversity Framework in Montreal this week. We are grateful for your role in leading the UK in its efforts to secure high-ambition outcomes and were pleased to see pesticides included in Target Seven. As you noted on your return to the Houses of Commons, “nature is both the essential foundation and a powerful engine of our economy” – yet it cannot perform this vital function when damaged and degraded by toxic pesticides.

We are aware that in October the Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) discussed an application for an emergency authorisation for use of thiamethoxam on sugar beet crops in 2023. The minutes note that the Committee’s advice remained unchanged from last year, when the ECP advised against an application for a similar authorisation. This neonicotinoid pesticide was banned by the Conservative Government in 2018, during your tenure as Environment Minister, due to the risk it poses to pollinators and our waterways.

Since then, the evidence of the damage that neonicotinoids have on our precious wildlife populations has only strengthened. Neonicotinoids not only have lethal impacts for bees, but also harm aquatic wildlife when washed from fields into streams and rivers. Rather than authorising the use of damaging pesticides, the UK Government should focus on support for farmers to adopt Integrated Pest Management strategies.

If the UK is to play its part in reversing global biodiversity decline, another derogation for thiamethoxam cannot be allowed. Given the UK’s commitments in Montreal, we trust you will respect the advice of the ECP and reject the application for the emergency authorisation for thiamethoxam. We would be pleased to discuss this issue with you further in the new year.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Edwards, Director of Policy & Public Affairs, The Wildlife Trusts

Katie-Jo Luxton, Executive Director of Global Conservation, RSPB

Josie Cohen, Head of Policy and Campaigns, PAN UK

Matt Shardlow, Chief Executive, Buglife

Paul de Zylva, Senior Nature Campaigner, Friends of the Earth

Professor Jeremy Biggs, CEO, Freshwater Habitats Trust

David Bunt, Chief Executive, Institute of Fisheries Management

Richard Benwell, Chief Executive, Wildlife & Countryside Link

The Pesticide Collaboration



Friends of the Earth



Institute of Fisheries Management

