



Conference Conclusions:
Speciality Crops and “Minor Uses”
Conference*
4th November 2009

*The Conference was organised by the following 8 food chain organisations:



Introduction

A Conference on speciality crops and minor uses was held on 4th November 2009 by eight food chain organisations¹. It looked at the impact and challenges resulting from Regulation 1107/2009 on the authorisation of plant protection products² for speciality crops and minor uses.

In practice, “minor use”³ applies in particular to fruits and vegetables, storage, transport and trade of cereals, seeds and flowers. Speciality crops, which include most vegetables, fruits, nurseries and flowers, accounts for an EU production value of greater than €60 billion per year, representing more than 20% of the value of EUs total agricultural production.

The conference was attended by more than 100 participants from the food value chain and including national and European authorities. The conclusions hereinafter represent the views of the participants at the Conference including the eight co-organising food chain organisations.

Key conclusions of the Speciality crops and Minor uses Conference 4 November 2009

- **PROTECTION OF SPECIALTY CROPS AND USES: Minor use authorizations ensure the protection of high value specialty crops and uses that contribute to the availability of high-quality healthy and affordable food for all consumers and upholding of the biodiversity.**

The sustainable production of high quality, high value crops is vital for both the EU economy and also for securing the future of the European continent’s food supply at an affordable cost to consumers.

This continuous challenge for a sustainable agriculture is intrinsically linked to the discussion on minor uses and the need to maintain existing solutions as well as developing new solutions that will minimise the impact of the current and future legislation on the crop protection toolbox available to our farmers and our farmers’ ability to produce minor crops in the future. This will help delivering high quality healthy affordable food for all consumers whilst upholding biodiversity.

- **GREATER COORDINATION: There is a need to have specific EU workgroups and coordination units to look at minor use issues and find common crop protection solutions for specialty crops. The Commission’s commitment given at the Conference to re-instate these groups as soon as possible was supported by all participants.**

EU working groups, which brought together the different Member States, are an important centre of expertise which ensure continuity and cooperation between the work being carried out on minor uses in different EU countries. The expertise available in the minor uses teams is an indispensable tool to support the work on the Commission report⁴ and to consider the available options for the way forward. In addition, the working groups could also be an adequate forum for coordinating and identifying minor uses lists⁵. Participants therefore highly support the Commission’s commitment to restart the working groups as soon as possible and make best use of their expertise to support the aims set out in Regulation 1107/2009.

¹ The eight food chain organisations are: AREFLH, CELCAA, COCERAL, COPA-COGECA, ECPA, ESA, FRESHFEL and OEITFL.

² Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market and repealing Council Directives 79/117/EEC and 91/414/EEC

³ Minor use is defined under Regulation 1107/2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market in article 3 as meaning the “*use of a plant protection product in a particular Member State on plants or plant products which are: (a) not widely grown in that Member State, or (b) widely grown to meet an exceptional plant protection need*”.

⁴ Article 51 §9 of Regulation 1107/2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market states that: “*By two years after the entry into force of this Regulation, the Commission shall present a report to the European Parliament and the Council on the establishment of a European fund for minor uses, accompanied, if appropriate, by a legislative proposal.*”

⁵ Article 51§8 of Regulation 1107/2009 states that: “*Member States shall establish and regularly update a list of minor uses.*”

- **A STEP TOWARDS IMPROVED COOPERATION:** The workshop was a first step and broader cooperation between all the players in the public and private sector is required, including wider cooperation with third countries. Such cooperation needs to have a holistic approach that will also consider the implications of the implementation of the Sustainable Use Directive⁶.

The minor use issue and its impacts on the increasing lack of economically viable crop protection solutions has not only economic consequences for growers confronted with lower productivity and less quality, but also raises concerns for Integrated Pest Management with an increased danger of disease or pest resistance developing. Ultimately it may no longer be economically viable to grow certain crops in the EU, and that in turn will lead to further problems with crop rotation, biodiversity and last but not least availability and affordable prices. Hence, a holistic understanding of the minor uses situation is needed in order to take into account all potential consequences.

In order to tackle the “minor use” challenge, cooperation is key. The conference enabled to gather not only 8 food chain associations but also participants from national and European authorities. It is believed that the conference will be a kick-off for enhanced, transparent and trustful cooperation between all actors. The re-instatement of the European working groups on minor uses will definitively create the required frame for such cooperation. This goes in addition to the importance of exploring opportunities for work sharing on different solutions and methods applied with third country authorities, through the establishment of a euro-transnational platform. In order to further improve cooperation, having a dedicated secretariat would be a very efficient tool.

- **MINOR USE FUND:** The IR-4 programme from the United States is an excellent model that provides solutions and has shown a high return on the investment made. A similar approach could be beneficial in Europe.

The American IR-4 programme is a US government funded research programme to facilitate registration of sustainable pest management technology for speciality crops and minor uses⁷. It particularly supports field trials and extrapolations researches following growers requests.

Annually, the IR-4 Project conducts about 100 studies consisting of approximately 600 field trials with an annual budget of about \$18 million of direct funding and \$18 million of in-kind contributions. This effort leads to nearly 1000 specialty crop registrations that contribute approximately \$4,5 billion to the US gross domestic product.⁸

During the Conference, a call was made for more investment to ensure the availability of crop protection solutions for speciality crops and minor uses in the European Union. Building upon the IR-4 results, we strongly support the establishment of a similar approach for Europe.

By two years of the entry into force of Regulation 1107/2009, the Commission will come up with a report on the establishment of a European fund for minor uses⁹. This report should apprehend all the complexities and impacts of the minor uses issues in order to pave the way towards appropriate and concrete solutions. Such a fund would not only ensure a coordinated approach towards authorisation of plant protection products on speciality crops and minors uses throughout the European Union. It would also ensure better cooperation between relevant parties in the Member States in order to improve information sharing, including the development of an extensive database of problem areas and potential solutions. In the meantime, provisional solutions for growers need to be analysed and identified in cooperation with stakeholders and authorities.

⁶ Directive 2009/128/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 establishing a framework for Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides.

⁷ <http://ir4.rutgers.edu>

⁸ National Economic Impact of the IR-4 Project, May 2007. <http://ir4.rutgers.edu/Other/IR4EconomicImpact.pdf>

⁹ See footnote 4.