

European Parliament Supports low-cadmium fertilizers

BRUSSELS (01/11/2017) – Safer Phosphates welcomes the outcome of the European Parliament's debate and subsequent vote on the Circular Economy (CE) package, which includes measures to limit cadmium (Cd) and other heavy metal levels in phosphate-based fertilizers that are used by farmers to grow crops in EU member states. These measures are aimed at supporting the long-term sustainability of EU soils and food systems by minimising the potential negative impacts of Cd on the environment and on human health.

A strong majority of 411 MEPs voted in favour of reducing cadmium levels in phosphate-based crop nutrients in Strasbourg on Tuesday the 24th of October, while just 230 voted against. The European Parliament decision aims to progressively reduce the Cd content in phosphate-based fertilizers, from an initial limit of 60 mg Cd / Kg P₂O₅ to 20 mg Cd / Kg P₂O₅ over a total period of 16 years.

This move is in line with research carried out by Wageningen University (Netherlands), which has shown that the average Cd content in phosphate-based fertilizers should not exceed 20 mg Cd / Kg P₂O₅ in order to prevent its accumulation in agricultural soils.

Safer Phosphates and its members welcome the MEPs' decision and support the aim of strengthening the EU's food security by mitigating the potential long-term health risks caused by Cd, known to be a dangerous carcinogen. It also supports the EU's proposal to introduce limit values for four other heavy metals: lead (Pb), arsenic (As), chromium hexavalent (Cr VI) and mercury (Hg). These are commonly found in phosphate fertilizers and potentially pose a risk to health.

About Safer Phosphates:

Safer Phosphates™ (www.saferphosphates.com) was established in May 2017 as a network of organisations committed to improving the environmental footprint of phosphate-based mineral fertilizer use. Its partners include companies involved in the production of phosphate resources on three continents (Africa, North America and Eurasia). Ultimately, the partnership aims to develop and share knowledge about safe and sustainable phosphate-based fertilizers that is otherwise not readily available, while also promoting solutions that optimise fertilizer choice, food security and agricultural sustainability.