

Safer Phosphates calls on EU Member States to defend safer and more sustainable consumption of phosphates

Safer Phosphates has issued a letter to the Member States of the European Union, in which it calls upon the national governments to consider a more sustainable and environmentally friendly approach to the review of fertilizer regulation currently under discussion in the Council of the European Union. This regulation will also soon be discussed in tripartite discussions between the European Commission, The Council and the European Parliament.

In its letter, the coalition formed by companies from Canada, Egypt, Russia and South Africa ask representatives from the 28 Member States to defend measures approved by the European Commission and the European Parliament that would reduce the level of contaminants, especially cadmium, in phosphate-based fertilizers. Cadmium is a highly carcinogenic substance that is naturally present in phosphate rock, which is the key raw material for the manufacture of phosphate-based fertilizers.

Cutting cadmium exposure from food intake is a necessary measure, and scientific findings have shown that this can be achieved by reducing the levels of this heavy metal that is contained in fertilizers. Certain parts of the EU population, particularly babies and vegetarians, are already exposed to cadmium at levels that meet or exceed acceptable limits.

In addition, new scientific information by Wageningen Research shows that to achieve an EU-wide standstill in cadmium accumulation in soils over the next 100 years, a maximum level of 20 mg of Cd per kg of P₂O₅ in mineral fertilizers would be required. For arable soils, the critical value is in fact much lower.

While the reduction of cadmium in fertilizers would require certain suppliers to make changes, extensive economic and market analysis provides strong evidence that there is already a sufficiently diverse supply of low-cadmium phosphate ore from multiple locations around the world, in addition to the numerous technical options that producers could implement to adapt production and reduce cadmium levels in the crop nutrients they sell to EU farmers.

Safer Phosphates has therefore called upon the Council of the European Union to support the measures approved by the European Commission and the European Parliament in October that would progressively reduce the cadmium contents in fertilizers down to 20 mg/kg Cd P₂O₅ and would introduce mandatory labelling that would enable farmers to easily identify the best quality nutrients for their products.

The Safer Phosphates Alliance will follow with great interest the developments in the Council and the upcoming negotiations of this institution with the European Parliament and the European Commission. Safer Phosphates shares its commitment to provide transparent, comprehensive and reliable information about EU access to clean fertilizers as well as access to scientific evidence about the impact of contaminants contained in fertilizers on human health and the environment.