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**NOTE**

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Adoption of measures at EU level to create the conditions for discontinuing the use of the environmentally problematic substances contained in plant protection products - Information from the Belgian delegation

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Delegations will find in the Annex a note from the Belgian delegation on the above subject, which will be discussed under 'Any other business' at the Environment Council meeting on 20 December 2018.

**Adoption of measures at EU level to create the conditions for discontinuing the use of the environmentally problematic substances contained in plant protection products**

**- Information from the Belgian delegation -**

Plant protection products have been very much in the news recently. To cite only the most recent developments, there has been the Commission communication on the development of a global EU framework on endocrine disruptors, not to mention the results of the tests conducted as part of a campaign involving the biomonitoring of samples from horses in six EU Member States.

This is not to deny the actions under way to improve the quality of the evaluations or the progress achieved in recent years in Europe in terms of the standardisation of procedures and of the level of requirements for the approval documents following the introduction of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009, which is probably the strictest framework in the world for the placing of plant protection products on the market.

The main objective of this note is rather to initiate work which ought to be carried out at European level, complementary to the 'National Pesticide Reduction Plans', to create the conditions to develop and encourage sustainable alternatives to the use of plant protection products, with priority being given to the most problematic of the substances of concern.

Indeed, recent cases of scientific and societal controversies surrounding plant protection products suggest that withdrawals of substance approvals will become increasingly frequent in future, particularly in order to protect health and the environment, or even following judicial decisions or choices made by the holders of approvals.

However, such withdrawals must be prepared for and anticipated, not only in order to avoid leaving sectors (and in particular agriculture) without any alternatives, but also to prevent the implementation of practices or alternatives that are harmful to health or the environment.

It is therefore by being proactive, in the context of environmental competences, and by supporting the development of alternatives that environmental and health issues can be taken into account efficiently and effectively.

