



# FPC PRESS RELEASE

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## **Future of horticulture remains on the 'critical list'**

The future of horticulture in the UK and across Europe remains on the 'critical list' as EU proposals are finalised today which will reduce growers' ability to fight common pests, weeds and diseases says the Fresh Produce Consortium. The proposals will go to the European Parliament for plenary vote in the New Year.

"We could be facing a bleak future after MEPs vote in the New Year on these proposals," commented Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of the Fresh Produce Consortium. "The horticulture industry already has a limited choice of crop protection products approved for use on minor crops. These proposals will axe a number of key substances which are critical to the production of produce such as peas, carrots, parsnips, onions, and will affect fruits such as strawberries, raspberries, pears and apples.

Thanks to the European Parliament it may become uneconomic to grow certain horticultural crops in the UK and hard pressed consumers will see fruit and vegetable prices go through the roof."

According to an updated agronomic assessment by the UK's Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD) the proposals could remove up to 23 per cent of crop protection products which are vital to the production of fruit and vegetables across Europe. Loss of some herbicides would seriously affect weed control for carrots, parsnips and onions, and PSD assesses there is the potential 'for up to 100 per cent yield loss on carrots'.

The European Council has advised that a five-year derogation which will allow the continued use of active substances to control a 'serious danger to plant health' is expected to be used only on an exceptional basis. The horticulture industry is unlikely to have new alternative products for use over the next ten years, given that most substances awaiting evaluation are variations on existing substances, and the long lead-in times and additional costs for development and approval of products for use on minor crops.

The European Parliament's AGRI committee also commissioned a study which concluded: 'It is unlikely that organic farming could be used to substitute for conventional agriculture because it typically produces smaller yields. .. European farmers and growers must be given access to a variety of pesticides, with different modes of action, as a vital method for IPM [integrated pest management] and for pesticide resistance management. If key pesticides are withdrawn too rapidly then the market will be unable to fill the gap in time.'

Prime Minister Gordon Brown has given his support to FPC and other organisations, saying: "We remain concerned that the European Parliament's Committee is continuing to press for changes which could damage agriculture and food production without securing meaningful benefits for health or the environment. We will continue to stress the need for a proper understanding of the impacts for the whole Community as the negotiations progress."

"The Prime Minister's support is a welcome boost. We will continue to fight for the future of horticulture and to call for a full European impact assessment to be included in the Regulations before they are enforced," added Nigel Jenney. "We shall be lobbying MEPs before the vote in the New Year and encouraging our members and worldwide trade contacts to hold them accountable for the impact of their decision making on their constituents. We must defend the right of the consumer to enjoy good quality healthy produce."

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**Notes for editors:**

1. The Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC) is the UK's fresh produce trade association and is based in Peterborough. The FPC has represented the fresh produce sector for many years and is recognised across the UK and EU as the voice of the industry. Extensive membership covers the complete spectrum of industry businesses including growers, importers, wholesalers, retailers, distributors, processors, packers, food service companies and other allied organisations.
2. For the UK Pesticides Safety Directorate's report visit:

[http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/uploadedfiles/Web\\_Assets/PSD/Revised\\_Impact\\_Report\\_1\\_Dec\\_2008\(fin al\).pdf](http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/uploadedfiles/Web_Assets/PSD/Revised_Impact_Report_1_Dec_2008(fin al).pdf)