16 March 2016

Reference number: FoI/EIR - 277

REQUEST UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000/ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REGULATIONS

I am writing in response to the request you made to BBSRC under the Freedom of Information Act/Environmental Information Regulations, which was received on Friday 4 December 2015. Due to the nature of your request it will be dealt with under the Environmental Information Regulations.

Statement of information requested

- Correspondence between BBSRC and Syngenta, Bayer, the Crop Protection Association and NFU regarding neonicotinoids between April 2015 - January 2016
- Correspondence between BBSRC and Rothamsted regarding neonicotinoids between April 2015 - January 2016
- Details of funding received from Syngenta, Bayer, the Crop Protection Association and any other agrochemical companies and/or related special interest groups between 2010-16.

Background

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) is one of seven Research Councils that work together as Research Councils UK (RCUK). It is funded from the Government’s Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. BBSRC’s budget for 2014/15 was £509M and it supports around 1,600 scientists and 2,000 research students in universities and institutes in the UK. Information about BBSRC’s mission can be found on our website at http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/organisation/mission.aspx.

UK Shared Business Services (UK SBS) provides a range of services, including IT, to BBSRC and other public sector organisations. UK SBS enters contracts on its clients behalf and provides services to them.

Duty to confirm or deny

BBSRC does hold some information requested.

Exemptions

Under the Environmental Information Regulations some of the information requested is exempt from disclosure and the relevant exception has been used;

“When information is the personal data of someone other than the applicant, regulation 12(3) requires you not to disclose that personal data”.

For further information relating to the Environmental Information Regulations please use the following link https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-environmental-information-regulations/refusing-a-request/
Requested Information

Taking the separate parts of your request in turn:

- **Correspondence between BBSRC and Syngenta, Bayer, the Crop Protection Association and NFU regarding neonicotinoids between April 2015 - January 2016**

  BBSRC holds no correspondence with the organisations named above regarding neonicotinoids between April 2015 - January 2016.

- **Correspondence between BBSRC and Rothamsted regarding neonicotinoids between April 2015 - January 2016**

  BBSRC does hold correspondence and it is attached with personal data redacted as per regulation 12(3).

- **Details of funding received from Syngenta, Bayer, the Crop Protection Association and any other agrochemical companies and/or related special interest groups between 2010-16.**

  BBSRC has not received funding for its own activities from any of these organisations between 2010-16. From time to time, companies may make in-kind contributions to research grants.

  Some of the research funded by BBSRC is supported by partner organisations in which the funding awarded by BBSRC to the academic organisation is supplemented by funding from partners to the research organisation. Within the period of 2010-2016 partner funding from the organisations listed has been made in the form of subscriptions to the following clubs which then fund research organisations:

  Integrated Biorefining Research and Technology Club (IBTI)  [http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/innovation/sharing-challenges/ibti-club/](http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/innovation/sharing-challenges/ibti-club/)
  - Syngenta Ltd has paid a total of £60K in subscriptions to IBTI.
  - Croda has paid a total of £40K in subscriptions to IBTI.

  Crop Improvement Research Club (CIRC)  [http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/innovation/sharing-challenges/circ/](http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/innovation/sharing-challenges/circ/)
  - Syngenta Ltd has paid a total of £50K in subscriptions to CIRC.
  - BASF has paid a total of £50K in subscriptions to CIRC.
  - Monsanto UK Ltd has paid a total of £50K in subscriptions to CIRC.

  Sustainable Agriculture Research and Innovation Club (SARIC)  [http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/innovation/sharing-challenges/saric/](http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/innovation/sharing-challenges/saric/)
  - Syngenta Ltd has paid a total of £15K in subscriptions to SARIC.
  - Bayer CropScience has paid a total of £15K in subscriptions to SARIC.
  - Monsanto UK Ltd has paid a total of £15K in subscriptions to SARIC.

  Diet and Health Research Industry Club (DRINC)  [http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/innovation/sharing-challenges/drinc/](http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/innovation/sharing-challenges/drinc/)
  - DuPont has paid a total of £60K in subscriptions to DRINC.

If you have any further questions, please contact me quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely

BBSRC Freedom of Information Officer
Publication: please note that this response to your request may be published on a public website.

Complaints Process

If you are dissatisfied with how we have handled your request, you may register a formal complaint with the BBSRC Complaints Officer at complaints.officer@bbsrc.ac.uk, who will conduct an internal review.

If you are not happy with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner, Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, Tel: 01625 545 745, https://ico.org.uk/.
Dear [Name],

Thank you very much for forwarding this query in detail. I will need to discuss this issue with my colleagues before agreeing a way forward on this, and will get back in touch as soon as I am able to provide some clarity.

Best wishes,

[Name]

Polaris House, North Star Avenue, Swindon
SN2 1UH, UK

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From: [Name]
Sent: 28 October 2015 09:41
To: [Name]
Subject: GFS: Food system resilience: BB/N020561/1 - two additional letters of support

Dear [Name],

Excuse me but I have received two further letters of support for my proposal, “Resilience to crop attack: Development and uptake of alternative crop protection strategies in a post-neonicotinoid environment”. These letters came in late.

As I submitted the proposal on Monday evening, in advance of your deadline on Tuesday, I can no longer access the application. If possible please could you attach the e-mail (from the Association of Independent Crop Consultants) below and the attached letter from Agrii to the proposal? I thought it would be worth asking but excuse me if it is not possible.

Kind regards,

[Name]

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From: [Name]
Sent: 28 October 2015 08:56
To: [Name]
Cc: 'AICC'
Subject: Request for letter of support for CSFB research
Importance: High

Dear [Name],
Apologies for the delay, I have been away. I hope that you can use this endorsement, let me know if you need it in paper form on headed paper.

Kind Regards

AICC as the professional body for independent crop consultants representing 40% of the UK arable advice market with 244 members, fully supports this CSFB research project. Over the next 5 to 10 years farmers and their advisers face the loss of numerous valuable active ingredients used in the fight against pests, weeds and diseases. We have already seen the effects of the loss of neonicotinoid seed dressings for oilseed rape crops for control of Cabbage Stem Flea Beetle. In the worst affected areas there was a 25% complete failure of crops with the yield of many of the rest significantly reduced. This has led to over 30% reduction in the oilseed rape crop sown this autumn in these areas.

In future farmers and their advisers will have to increasingly find innovative ways of combating the effects of insect pests as well as weeds and diseases which are economically as well as environmentally sustainable. It is so important to have scientific rigour and understanding in developing the systems. At the heart of the project is the involvement with the farming community from an early stage so vital for a positive outcome.

www.aicc.org.uk

Executive Committee: Patrick Stephenson (Chair), Sarah Cowrlick (CEO), Mike Warner (Immediate Past Chair), Peter Brumpton and Peter Taylor

AICC (Association of Independent Crop Consultants)
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To whom it may concern

October 2015

We would like to lend Agrii's support to this application for funding of alternative crop protection strategies being led by Prof Toby Bruce from Rothamsted.
As we see the chemical crop protection armoury being rapidly reduced with a very limited number of replacement chemicals we increasingly need to be looking at integrated solutions and in particular be prepared to look at novel solutions that in the past we may not have thought of as able to provide a reliable level of control. But now could as part of a thoroughly tested IPM programme make the difference between crop success and failure.

Oilseed rape has become over the last 40 years a most important crop to UK farming and with an ever increasing demand for vegetable oil it also a most valuable crop to the UK economy. However the recent loss of the neonic seed dressings in the autumn of 2014 has completely changed the viability of the crop in the south east and parts of Eastern England. We experienced devastating attacks of cabbage stem flea beetle resulting in large areas of lost crop. On the evidence to date in autumn 2015 cabbage stem flea beetle appears to be impacting the crop both further west and south.
Even before the loss of the neonic's rape growing and its establishment presented challenges. There is a small window for drilling (mid-august to 1st week in September) which often coincides with very dry soils. At early growth phases the crop is very vulnerable to pests and weed competition. From a broadleaf weed perspective the only available herbicides are pre-emergence. Therefore the cost of establishing rape is more expensive than many other crops with maybe £200 / ha invested before the crop has even emerged. And even more so now we have a reduced level of confidence that it will establish.

Over the last few years we have seen resistance developing with flea beetles to the pyrethroids (I have had some tested showing 54% resistance). So in autumn 2014 and now again in autumn 2015 as we see flea beetle attacking the emerging rape crop and yet all we can do is try and encourage growth. In autumn 2014 we managed to get a number of crops in the high risk areas to establish well and grow through the adult attack. However late in the autumn and winter we found significant larvae with these plants. Previous data has shown that plants can cope with a number of larvae without significant loss. But with 12 plus larvae per plant, a dry spring with poor nitrogen uptake, heavy pigeon grazing pressure and with the lack of a competitive crop blackgrass growing back many crops went backwards with a number of fields having to be taken out. On one farm, where I am the agronomist on, of 300 ha of land planted to Winter Oilseed rape - 80 ha were totally lost and on another 120 ha yields were significantly reduced. The overall output of rape on the farm was down from the previous 3 year average of 4.5 t/ha down to 3.5t/ha. With added costs and this yield reduction I have calculated that the loss of neonic seed dressings has cost this farmer £100k.
Going forward what can we do? We no longer have confidence in being able to establish rape in areas of the country. With no other crops providing such an early harvest and an increasing demand for the oil it would be most unfortunate if we were no longer able to grow it. Secondly the crop does provide a different ecological habitat to cereals and to see it disappear and be replaced by more cereals would not be good I believe.

In conclusion we therefore strongly support the proposed research and implementation programmes that Toby Bruce has put together and would very much like to see it funded.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Richards
Senior agronomist
Agri
Tel 07831 160642
Andrew.richards@agri.co.uk
From: Tracey
Sent: 05 January 2016 15:34
To: 
Subject: RE: For Comment: Top 10 threats to UK plants - BBSRC opinion piece

That’s great, many thanks. Do you have any stats to indicate the impact that aphids and beetles have on these crops? Don’t worry if nothing to hand as I am searching for similar data for other threats anyway.

I’m interested in what you said about CSFB and it making an appearance when other controls fail. Is it true to say that these were not a problem before the ban on neonicotinoids, or just to a lesser extent – are they emerging or re-emerging?

Best wishes

From: Tracey
Sent: 05 January 2016 15:03
To: 
Subject: RE: For Comment: Top 10 threats to UK plants - BBSRC opinion piece

Dear

For UK crops the most important pests are:

**Aphids in OSR, cereals and sugar beet**

Peach-potato aphid (*Myzus persicae*) transmits virus disease in OSR and sugar beet
Grain aphid (*Sitobion avenae*) and bird cheery-oat aphid (*Rhopalosiphum padi*) transmit virus diseases in cereals

**Beetles in OSR**
Pollen beetle (*Meligethes aeneus*) and Cabbage stem flea beetle (*Psylliodes chrysocephala*) do direct damage by eating crop

It is difficult to say which are biggest threat because this depends on severity of any outbreak, geographical location and efficacy of control measures. We often only see the threat when control fails such as the outbreak of CSFB in OSR following the ban on use of seed treated with neonicotinoids.

Hope this helps
Best

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**From:**
**Sent:** 05 January 2016 14:28
**To:**
**Subject:** RE: For Comment: Top 10 threats to UK plants - BBSRC opinion piece

Dear,

Many thanks. Yes I will be considering trees etc as well as crops.

NB I have also contacted [redacted] and others elsewhere with regards to various plant pathogens. However, I am lacking in experts on the insect/pest side of things, which obviously constitute a large collective threat to plants. Would I be right in thinking that you might be able to provide some details about the relative importance of these, perhaps with some examples (as part of a top 10 or otherwise)?

Best wishes

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**From:**
**Sent:** 05 January 2016 11:03
**To:**
**Subject:** RE: For Comment: Top 10 threats to UK plants - BBSRC opinion piece

Dear,

I guess this depends on what ‘plants’ you want to consider, just crop plants in the UK? In which case there are some obvious insect threats and I could ask colleagues about pathogen threats. However, you might need to consider trees/ornamentals/garden and amenity plants?

Best

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**From:**
**Sent:** 04 January 2016 15:28
**To:**
**Subject:** For Comment: Top 10 threats to UK plants - BBSRC opinion piece

Dear,

I am looking to write an opinion-style feature looking at the biggest threats to UK plants, both now and in the future. From a quick glance at Defra’s risk register, I see that threats from pests and diseases are many and varied.
I therefore wondered whether you might wish to contribute your opinion on what you see as the top 10 threats to UK plants, and/or provide a few words on your own research expertise and how that ties in with a particular threat/plant species and why this is important?

NB By definition, this article has a wider remit than UK crop species although obviously if ranking threats by the impact that they have or could have (unless there are better ways of doing so?), then crop pests and diseases are going to feature prominently.

My plan is to ask several plant experts and then edit the piece together, in the hope that there will be some overlap in opinion! Ideally the piece will be published at the end of January.

Best wishes

Please note that I work Monday to Thursday

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