Summary of discussions regarding the Working Group reports

Helen Thompson
Secretary of Bee Protection Group

DOI: 10.5073/jka.2012.437.060

On the basis of the discussions at the 2008 meeting six Working Groups were formed prior to the 2011 meeting:

- Risks posed by dusts
- Assessment of risks posed by guttation
- Acceptability of effects in field studies
- Acceptable levels of control and toxic reference mortality from in-cage and field tests
- Design of post-registration monitoring studies for systemic pesticides, and the
- Working group on brood studies continued its work

Presentations from each of these working groups were included in the 2011 meeting and there was a brief discussion following these. These views of the participants, summarised here, .have been incorporated into the further considerations of each of the working groups and outputs will be reviewed at the next meeting in Ghent in 2014.

Risks posed by dusts

There was concern raised by any 'black-box' approach to predicting dust dispersal. There are theoretical approaches in the literature for distribution of dust in the atmosphere, e.g. soil particles - how relevant are these?

The APENET data from Italy show differing dust distributions from all other studies - are there differences in methodology in these studies and is it possible to see the detailed methodology and data from the Italian studies to assess this?

The issue was raised that if all mitigation specified on labels is in place on products and on seed bags, can it be foreseen that dust from seeds will be considered a manageable issue, i.e. will there be a return to market?

The size of the plot is a critical factor in the interpretation of field studies on dust drift - it is important to include a correction factor to account for differing sizes of plots in dust drift studies.

Assessment of risks posed by guttation

It is important to determine if the risk is lower for some crops, e.g. sugar beet, and therefore there is no need to generate data from field studies whereas maize is a worst-case crop. However, even maize studies have shown that the effects may only occur on single days in one in 20 field studies and there is a need to determine the acceptability of these infrequent events.

Mitigation in terms of the distance of the colony from the crop is only appropriate for honeybees, guttation poses a risk to the wider environment. We should consider risk to other species separately, e.g. bumble bees.

In identifying an acceptable distance from a potentially guttating crop, who is responsible for maintaining the distance, the farmer or the beekeeper? - in some cases the apiary may be a permanent site

Acceptability of effects in field studies

How does the mortality of individuals affect the colony – we need to model at the colony level to identify impacts. A population model may be a useful tool to extrapolate the impact of effects but with caveats that we are dealing with the real world and there is a need for funding to link appropriate models, e.g. disease and population models, with pesticide effects.

Acceptable levels of control and toxic reference mortality from in-cage and field tests

Recommendation to combine this working group with the field effects group and divide into two subgroups on semi-field and field effects.

Brood studies

There was discussion on the current status of the validation of the Aupinel larval test method – is there anything we can do to progress this further to ensure acceptance?

Design of post-registration monitoring studies for systemic pesticides

There is a need for stewardship and ensure compliance with the label which requires farmer education.

Monitoring can provide essential information on both unforeseen effects under realistic use conditions and confirmation that risk assessments are protective.