



January 2022

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the use of neonicotinoids.

I believe that the restrictions on neonicotinoids remain justified due to the scientific evidence that they are harmful to bees and other pollinators. However, I know that ministers can consider applications for emergency authorisations in exceptional circumstances where diseases or pests cannot be controlled by any other reasonable means.

I know that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has approved an emergency, temporary authorisation for the use of thiamethoxam, which is a neonicotinoid pesticide. This is due to the beet yellows virus, which poses a threat to sugar beets in England. I am aware that emerging sugar beet seedlings are vulnerable to predation by aphids, which have the potential to spread the virus. I understand that 63% of the UK's sugar comes from domestic production of sugar beet, which could be at risk if a significant amount of this national crop is infected. The strictly time limited emergency authorisation of this neonicotinoid treatment, Syngenta's Cruiser SB, will provide emergency protection against this virus.

I would like to assure you that the temporary use of thiamethoxam will be tightly controlled. There will be an initial threshold for use, meaning that seed treatment will only be used if the predicted level of virus is at or above 19 per cent of the national crop according to independent modelling. I am assured that if the virus threshold is not met then the neonicotinoid treated seed will not be used, which was the case in 2021. Strict criteria remain in place, meaning that this authorisation will only be used if necessary.

Finally, farmers will be forbidden from planting any flowering crop in the same field where the product has been used within 32 months of a treated sugar beet crop. This will reduce the environmental harm of thiamethoxam to bees.

My ministerial colleagues take their international commitments to environment protection very seriously. In the case of neonicotinoids and other chemicals, I am assured that the UK goes above the international standard and requires exporting companies to confirm with countries that they have accepted any imports before they are shipped.

I would like to assure you that the UK's approach to the use of emergency authorisations has not changed as a result of the UK's exit from the EU, and this approach is in line with the approach taken across Europe. In addition, 12 EU countries with significant sugar production, including France, Belgium, Denmark and Spain, have granted emergency authorisations in the last three years for neonicotinoid seed treatments following the EU-wide ban coming into force.

The UK's work to harness advancements in scientific research, including through gene editing, will also help to develop crops that are more resistant to aphids and other pests.



**Chris Heaton-Harris**  
Member of Parliament for Daventry  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA  
Tel: 020 7219 7048

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Chris".

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**