Dear Mr Wilson,

Consultation on the options for the future of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP).

I am responding on behalf of the Country Land and Business Association (CLA), regarding its view on the future of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP).

The Country Land and Business Association represents over 34,000 members in England and Wales. Our members own more than half the land area of England and Wales, with the majority involved directly or indirectly in agriculture. The CLA is also a founding member of the Voluntary Initiative, an industry-led partnership that promotes responsible use of pesticides. As a result, any changes to the ACP will be significant to our members who have an active interest in pesticide use.

**Question 1**

Do you support the Government’s preferred option, to abolish the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, and replace it with an expert scientific committee, for the reasons explained?

Yes, subject to conditions (stated in Question 3).

**Question 2**

If you do not support the Government’s preferred option, what is your preferred alternative and why?

Not applicable

**Question 3**

Do you have any additional points you would wish Ministers to consider before making their final decision?

The CLA recognizes the need for a non-statutory body, made up of a standing committee of experts to replace the ACP in providing salient and objective advice to Ministers on the use of pesticides. We agree that the establishment of a scientific advisory committee on pesticide use is consistent with advice from independent reviews, and that of the Chief Scientific Adviser, to move towards science led non-statutory bodies.
We agree that the requirements for the ACP have changed dramatically since 1985, with legislative procedures for pesticide use now predominantly taken at an EU level. As a result, we feel that a non-statutory body working within a redefined remit would render it more appropriate in providing expert scientific advice.

However, we do have concerns regarding the way in which the committee will operate, in particular:

**Committee Composition.**

- We would be interested to know how an expert committee would be formulated, and on what merits would members be chosen.
- We would be interested to know what process would be undertaken in shortlisting committee members.
- We feel that there should be members on any future committee who have an understanding of practical pesticide use, within a farming context.
- We feel that any committee must not be influenced by particular interest groups; moreover it must be represented by individuals who are able to provide objective advice based upon science and/or practical experience of pesticide use.
- We would be interested to know what the intended length of tenure is for membership on the committee, and whether it is taken on a fixed or rotational basis.

**Operation**

- We believe it is very important that the scope of the committee’s remit is outlined clearly. We would be interested to know whether the committee’s role would be on an advisory basis, or if Ministers are bound to any degree by their decisions.
- We feel that there should be clarification of where agenda items will originate. For example, will agenda items be raised on the back of concerns from political, public or scientific discussions?

**Transparency and Accountability**

- We believe that any future committee must be transparent in the way it operates. We would be interested to know what provisions will be put in place so that meetings are held openly, minutes published, and declarations of interests are made available.
- We would welcome any move that seeks to ensure regular attendance at committee meetings by committee members.

The CLA are happy to have this consultation response placed in Defra's library.

Yours faithfully,

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