

Low Risk Plant Protection Products

What are low-risk plant protection products?

An active substance can be approved as a low-risk substance if it meets the regular approval criteria and in addition meets the low-risk criteria as specified in Annex II, point 5 of Regulation (EC) 1107/2009. There are specific criteria for chemical substances and for micro-organisms. Products that contain only low-risk substances can then be authorised as a low-risk plant protection product. Because of their favourable properties low-risk products should be preferred by farmers and other users in their approach to manage pests.

The development and placing on the market of low-risk substances and products is encouraged by several regulatory incentives. Low-risk substances are approved for 15 years instead of 10 years and data protection on the studies submitted for the approval and subsequent authorisation is prolonged from 10 to 13 years. Moreover, a fast-track authorisation procedure with reduced timelines (120 days instead of one year) ensures that low-risk products can be placed on the market quickly. The low-risk status can be used in advertising.

For more information on the substances approved as low-risk substances, see the EU Pesticides Database ([link](#)).

What are basic substances?

Basic substances are substances that are not predominantly used for plant protection purposes but may be useful in plant protection. They are substances of no concern and can be approved for plant protection use as far as their risks are acceptable. Some of these substances have been traditionally used by farmers and may include foodstuffs. Examples are vinegar, sucrose or calcium hydroxide. Their approval by the Commission allows the use for purposes of plant protection, but they cannot be sold specifically as a plant protection product.

For more information, see the Commission's webpage on basic substance applications ([link](#)).

How do low-risk plant protection products fit in the context of Integrated Pest Management?

The Sustainable Use Directive promotes low pesticide input pest management, giving where possible priority to non-chemical methods, so that professional users switch to practices and products with the lowest risk to human health and the environment among those available for the same pest problem. The Directive lays down the general principles of Integrated Pest Management which have to be applied by all users since January 2014. Among those principles, when intervention against a pest is necessary, sustainable biological, physical and other non-chemical methods must be preferred to chemical methods if they provide satisfactory pest control. The products applied shall be as specific as possible for the target and shall have the least side effects on human health, non-target organisms and the environment. The Directive also prescribes that in specific areas -such as public areas or nature conservation areas- the use of low-risk plant protection products and biological control measures shall be given preference.

What does the Commission do to increase the availability of low-risk plant protection products?

To identify low-risk substances among the active substances already approved for use in plant protection, the Commission prioritised the assessment of potential low-risk ones in the ongoing review programme of these substances. The Commission also amended the low-risk criteria to facilitate the identification of low-risk substances while ensuring a high level of protection of human health, animal health and the environment.

Research and innovation is important to get more low-risk products to the market. Therefore, the Commission is funding several projects of research and innovation in the field of sustainable plant protection under the Horizon 2020 programme. More information can be found on the Commission's Horizon 2020 webpage on sustainable agriculture ([link](#)). Information on individual projects can be found on the European Commission's Cordis website ([link](#); search for plant protection or pesticides).

In 2016 the Commission supported the initiative of the Dutch Council Presidency which resulted in the endorsement in the Council in June 2016 of an implementation plan to identify key actions to increase the availability of low-risk plant protection products. This plan ([link](#)) contains 40 actions for Member States, the Commission and stakeholders. Implementation of the actions is ongoing.

The Commission is working together with Member States, EFSA and stakeholders in several working groups to further harmonise, optimise and simplify the assessment of potentially low-risk substances and products.