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New Studies show no alternatives to propiconazole CEI-Bois, EuroWindow and SBS call for a renewal of the approval of propiconazole for use in wood preservatives for timber windows and doors

Brussels, 1 September 2021 – CEI-Bois, EuroWindow and Small Business Standards (SBS) published an updated position paper including results of new studies scrutinizing for possible alternatives for propiconazole in wood preservatives for timber windows and doors. The studies show no suitable biocidal alternatives for propiconazole for sustainable wood-based products in construction. Therefore, the three associations call for a renewal of the approval of propiconazole and extend their invitation for a public-private partnership to develop long term sustainable alternatives.

The expiry date of propiconazole was pushed from the 31st March 2021 to 31st December 2022 giving the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) more time to assess. Part of this assessment is a public consultation for possible alternatives or substitutes for propiconazole. To feed into the consultation studies were conducted in 9 European countries to screen for suitable alternative wood preservatives over the past months. The findings are alarming for the wood working industry.

Propiconazole is needed for a couple of reasons in the wood working industry. The humid European climate and certain regulatory requirements as contained in several European Standards such as EN 599-1 and EN 335 makes it necessary to treat the timber sash and frame against fungal attacks. This also increases the use of wood in construction products and more specifically in windows and doors. Timber window and door manufacturers are currently using the approved active substance propiconazole in combination with one or two other active substances (Tebuconazole and/or Iodopropynyl Butyl Carbamate (IPBC)) when impregnating timber. This combination is essential to keep the total amount of active substances at a minimum, limit the concentration of impregnation product and at the same time ensure a long service life for the windows and doors.

The results of the studies shows that there are currently no suitable products free from propiconazole or tebuconazole and IPBC. A ban of propiconazole would therefore be problematic for the wood working industry as both, tebuconazole and IPBC, are also under revision and about to expire on 30.09.2022 (tebuconazole) and 31.12.2022 (IPBC). A potential ban of propiconazole would leave the wood working industry without any biocidal product ready to use in January 2023. Many wood products would be without an appropriate protection against outside factors, like rain or fungi, resulting in rapid deterioration of the material. This is neither sustainable nor economically viable.



In the renovation wave strategy, the European Commission points out that wood is a precious nature-based construction material as it can have double benefits of “*stocking carbon emissions in buildings and avoiding emissions that would have been needed to produce conventional construction materials*”. For the European Union the development is self-defeating with its aim in the Green Deal to use more organic construction material and become the first climate neutral continent, an aspect which is even more in the focus with the newly presented Fit-for-55 package from the European Commission.

Without renewal of the approval of propiconazole many users of wood material would be excluded from the market and may be forced to use other construction materials, going against the climate ambition of the European Union. The reasons for the exclusion are the difference in properties by hardwood and softwood and the need for biocides especially for softwood (as explained in the Annex I of the joint position paper). A consequence would be changes in the type of woods used, as classic wood species originating in the EU (e.g. Sweden, Alps) can no longer be used in some cases and have to be replaced by other wood species extracted from non-EU locations. For users of these wood preservatives, the priority is on the development of practical solutions that would ensure the use of wood as a sustainable material and not in defending a specific chemical substance.

Therefore, CEI-Bois, EuroWindoor and SBS support the following decision to maintain the relevancy of the timber window and door industry: Renew the approval of propiconazole until an equivalent substitute is available, tested and assessed for use in timber windows and doors.

CEI-Bois, EuroWindoor and SBS would also like to renew and reoffer their call for a public-private partnership on wood preservatives to be initiated by the European Commission without delay, where public authorities and the industry can agree on sustainable alternatives to biocidal products containing the active substances propiconazole, tebuconazole and IPBC. The first inquiry towards the European authorities to find a new product to replace propiconazole in an appropriate amount of time was denied earlier this year. Non the less there is hope to come together in a long run to find a solution.

Read the position paper ([link](#)).