

EU edges toward agreed policy on hormone disrupting chemicals

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The EU edged closer Tuesday toward a common stand on chemicals which can potentially disrupt the body's hormones and cause a range of serious health problems.

Member states approved a European Commission list of criteria to help identify what are known as endocrine disruptors in products used to protect farm animals and plants from disease and insects.

"This is an important step towards greater protection of citizens from [harmful substances](#)," said the Commission, the executive arm of the 28-nation European Union.

EU Health and Food Safety Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis said the vote represented a real step forward.

"After months of discussion we are advancing in the direction of the first regulatory system in the world with legally binding criteria to define what an endocrine disruptor is. This is a great success," Andriukaitis said in a Commission statement.

"The text will ensure that any active substance used in pesticides which is identified as an [endocrine disruptor](#) for people or animals can be assessed and withdrawn from the market."

Endocrine disruptors are believed to have a role in many health conditions, from obesity to infertility, and are found in many common goods such as cosmetics or even toys.

The body's endocrine system—in the ovaries and testes, as well as the adrenal, pituitary and thyroid glands—produce hormones that are secreted into the bloodstream to control and coordinate a range of critical body functions.

These hormones help regulate energy levels, reproduction, growth, development, as well as our response to stress and injury.

The disruptors issue has pitted industry and agriculture against consumer

and environmental groups for many years.

The EU even announced last year that it had reached broad agreement on what substances were involved but had to go back to the drawing board amid controversy.

Tuesday's decision was made by a Commission technical team but all 28 member states will have to formally endorse within the next three months to take it forward.

The Commission statement gave no details of the criteria agreed.

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