

Arguments and Positions

Agriculture and Biodiversity

Biodiversity has declined in recent decades. It is in everyone's interest to reverse this trend. The drop in biodiversity has various reasons. It is uncontested that agriculture bears a share in the responsibility.

Modern agriculture is part of the solution

The use of modern agrochemicals is often criticised. However, this criticism overlooks their contribution to productive agriculture: Their use preserves natural resources and ensures high-quality foods for a growing world population.

There is no contradiction between productive agriculture and the protection of biodiversity: As the largest land user, modern agriculture can make a major contribution to promoting biodiversity – by providing larger numbers of suitable habitats in the agricultural landscape. Already today, many measures can be easily integrated in the processes on fields without losing sight of their primary purpose, i.e. supplying foods, energy crops and renewables. As a result of the use of mineral fertilisers and plant protection products, the amount of land that German agriculture needs to produce its volumes of crops is considerably reduced – compared with an agricultural management style without such inputs. If these products were no longer used in this country, more land would have to be cultivated in other regions to cover the demand.

Plant protectants undergo extremely strict testing prior to their authorisation in the EU. Industry has long been supporting farmers in

the proper and safe use of its products. This is because plant protectants should get only where they have an effect to control weeds, fungi and pests. Digitalisation will offer great opportunities in the future to increase sustainability and efficiency in agriculture, for example, in the form of modern application techniques.

In view of the growing world population of some 10 billion by 2050, the above is urgently necessary. The World Health Organization (WTO) estimates that the demand for food will rise by ca. 70 percent by then. This enormous challenge cannot be met without modern inputs.

An open dialogue is needed

Promoting biodiversity is an overall task of society that can be achieved only through consensus and contributions from each individual. Studies show that in particular the loss of habitats and the monotonous design of urban, industrial and agricultural landscapes cause less biodiversity. The German federal government's insect protection action plan also clearly addresses this aspect that concerns society as a whole.

The chemical industry is committed to biodiversity as a societal task and wants to make its contribution together with agriculture. In a dialogue with all stakeholders, solutions should be developed that align the needs of productive agriculture and the protection of the environment with each other.

THE VCI IS CALLING FOR THE FOLLOWING

■ Support a holistic approach

Promoting biodiversity is an overall task of society and calls for a holistic approach. This holds true for both the German federal government's insect protection action plan and the forthcoming "Farm to Fork" strategy of the EU Commission. In order to develop this approach, the chemical industry is actively involved in an open dialogue along the entire value chain.

■ Perception of modern agriculture as part of the solution

The primary task of agriculture is to supply food. An agricultural management style without mineral fertilisers and plant protectants would require almost twice as much land. Higher land requirements would mean a further loss of habitats for many species. This discrepancy needs to be taken into account, so that aspects of nature protection and food security can be aligned with each other.

■ Digitalisation as an opportunity for efficiency increases

Plant protectants and fertilisers should be applied in a targeted and efficient manner. With a view to using the innovative techniques needed for this, the expansion of strong data networks must be driven forward in rural regions.