

Canada's pesticide regulator said on Wednesday that farmers could keep using the chemical imidacloprid to control crop-destroying insects under stricter conditions, softening an earlier proposal to ban it, [Reuters](#) reports.

The chemical, made by Germany's Bayer AG, is part of the neonicotinoid class of pesticides that farmers have sprayed on crops since the 1990s. Farmers use imidacloprid to protect fruits and vegetables from aphids and beetles.

Environmental groups, who criticized the ruling, say neonics harm beneficial aquatic insects when the chemicals accumulate in ponds and rivers. Those bugs are food for birds and fish.

The Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) proposed in 2016 phasing out imidacloprid due to those risks, before extending a feedback period.

But in a statement with its final ruling, the agency said that such risks are acceptable within certain limits, after considering new water-monitoring data.

Farmers must reduce their application rates and not spray within buffer zones around sensitive areas, it said. Uses in certain situations are banned.

Canada imposed other restrictions to protect bees in 2019.

The agency's decision to continue allowing the use of imidacloprid is encouraging, as it has already imposed numerous restrictions, said Chris Duyvelshoff, crop protection adviser at the Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association.

Bayer, which has two years to update Canadian product labels with new application instructions, echoed that response but said the new restrictions would hurt the horticulture industry.