

Bee-Friendly Shopper's Guide to Rapeseed Oil

Our farmers and their pesticide commitment

The farmers featured in the 'Bee-Friendly Shopper's Guide to Rapeseed Oil' are all conventional farmers - not organic - who continue to use pesticides on their fields, but they have taken the decision not to use three specific neonicotinoid pesticides on their oilseed rape crops.

The three neonicotinoid pesticides (their chemical names are clothianidin, imidacloprid, and thiamethoxam) are currently banned on oilseed rape (and many other flowering crops) across Europe because of their risk to bees.

But their use was temporarily authorised by the UK Government for oilseed rape crops sown in 2015 in some areas of England. A similar authorisation could be granted again in 2017. Their use could also be permanently restored following Brexit. The farmers featured in the Bee Friendly Shoppers Guide to Rapeseed Oil have pledged not to use the three bee-harming neonicotinoids on their oilseed rape even if they are allowed to due to the lifting of restrictions.

The 'Bee-Friendly Shoppers guide to Rapeseed Oil' only refers to the use of the three currently restricted neonicotinoid pesticides on oilseed rape. The farmers may be using other neonicotinoids which aren't covered by the current restrictions. They may also be using the three restricted neonicotinoids on other crops such as wheat (which is not pollinated by insects) - this is currently permitted under the EU restrictions.

The three neonics in question have been identified by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) as posing a "high acute risk" to honeybees, which is why we're focusing on them. We are currently campaigning for these pesticides to be banned permanently on all crops. See [Bees, pesticides & neonicotinoids](#) for further info

While we'd dearly love to see pesticide use reduced as much as possible, this won't happen overnight, and we need to encourage the farming community to move towards more sustainable farming practices. Supporting them when they do.

We believe that, in the case of the farmers we're working with, their decision to commit not to use these neonicotinoids on their oilseed rape, even if their use is temporarily authorised in some areas of the UK, is an important one for farming, which should be supported.

Why focus on rapeseed oil?

Oilseed rape is a crop that's particularly attractive to bees, due to its rich source of pollen and nectar. Until recently, use of neonicotinoid pesticides on this crop was very widespread on up to 80 per cent of the crop.

In 2013, following the EFSA finding that three neonicotinoids pose a 'high acute risk' to honeybees, restrictions were introduced in Europe on use of these neonics on crops attractive to bees – oilseed rape is a key crop in this category.

In 2016 a comprehensive 18 year study concluded that neonicotinoid seed-treated oilseed rape crops could be linked to long-term population decline of wild bee species across the English countryside.

The chemical industry have repeatedly attempted to overturn the ban, and as a result, the use of these neonicotinoids on oilseed rape has become controversial. The farmers featured in our shopper's guide are demonstrating that they can farm oilseed rape successfully without the use of the banned neonicotinoids, and have committed to do so in future.