

## ESA supports the renewal of the authorisation of the active substance diquat

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The use of diquat as desiccant is highly important for high quality seed production of potatoes, oilseed crops, maize and several minor seed crops. In the absence of diquat, desiccation in the seed production of the above-mentioned crops becomes significantly more challenging or even impossible in some cases as there are no alternative active substances for this specific use. Alternative products and methods, such as swathing, have been investigated thoroughly in several Member States, but have not lead to equally reliable products and/or methods, sufficiently safeguarding yield and seed quality.

Pre-harvest desiccation refers to the application of a herbicide to a crop shortly before harvest. Uneven crop growth is a problem in northern climates during wet summer or when weed control is poor. Desiccation rapidly interrupts vegetative growth which is indispensable in potatoes, oilseed crops, maize and some minor crops where reproductive uniformity is required and the transmission of plant pathogens need to be immediately disabled. Desiccation ensures fields rapidly reach a consistent level of maturity; allows for an even and efficient harvest; initiates weed control for a future crop.

Desiccation of crops with diquat is highly important (a.o.) for the following reasons:

### *For Potatoes:*

✿ The use of diquat as desiccant is crucial for securing viable production of potato seeds, through optimizing the size of the tubers in certain grades.

✿ Diquat maintains seed health. The rapid desiccation of the haulm and prevention of regrowth are required in order to prevent late virus transmission to the daughter tubers and to ensure rapid skin set. This is required to minimise disease and maximise seed health and can only be achieved effectively with the use of diquat as part of desiccation programmes. The alternative mechanical solutions present phytosanitary issues or can lead to negative environmental impact such as burning with gas, energy, more tractor hours, more fuel consumption, more pollution and more plant protection products to protect crops against pests and diseases. Absence of diquat specially in cases of late harvest will lead to much higher levels of virus transmission and /or rotting tubers and therefore declassification of seed potatoes.

✿ As the seed potato sector is the basis of the ware and starch potato sector, loosing diquat will heavily affect the overall potato sector worldwide in terms of quality of seed potatoes and therefore efficiency of used land and water, but also chemicals such as insecticides and fungicides.

### *For Oilseed crops and sunflower:*

✿ The use of diquat as desiccant is very important for seed production of oilseed crops as no chemical alternative is known in rapeseed. Neither chemical, nor physical alternative is known in sunflower seed production.

✿ The use of diquat ensures viability of the seed as a reduction of the moisture content enables the prevention of end season disease.

✿ Especially for seed production of hybrid oilseed rape is often faced the situation of extreme uneven ripening. This is caused by a long flowering period especially under unfavorable weather conditions during flowering. The only chance to harvest those productions is the use of a desiccant.

Not using a desiccant will mean big losses in quantity due to shattering and big quality issues due to a loss of germination caused by diseases.

- ✿ The use of diquat is crucial for sunflower hybrid seed production. If the crop will not be removed from the field in the right moment there is high risk of botrytis infection which will badly effect germination.

- ✿ Diquat is the only active substance which does not influence negatively the germination during the seed production of sunflower

- ✿ Diquat facilitates efficient and effective time management. As the fastest acting desiccant available, it maximises speedy uptake, delivering even crop ripening and allowing a better planning of harvesting without dependency on weather conditions for use and optimising time between cropping cycles. The alternative physical/mechanical methods require time and money investment.

- ✿ Diquat standardises the production by facilitating and accelerating the field harvest

*For Maize:*

- ✿ Diquat accelerates the desiccation of the plant. This allows to preserve and secure the quality of the productions by limiting diseases at the end of their cycle; it improves the germination for sensitive hybrids; it allows to perform and secure productions of late hybrids with late planting time and it reduces the industrial process such as drying, pre-cleaning etc.

- ✿ Alternative chemical and mechanical solutions have been tested but none of these solutions can replace even partially the effectiveness of diquat.

*For Minor Uses, i.e. minor seed production crops:*

- ✿ Diquat is used as desiccant for the seed production in a number of minor crops such as a.o.: field beans, field and broad peas, radish, carrot, cabbage, spinach, sugar beet, phacelia, poppies, linseed, forage grass, turf grass, fodder beet, fodder legumes, fodder radish, cotton, flower seed production, for similar reasons as outlined above.

- ✿ For these minor crops, there are practically no alternative products or methods available.

**Based on the above-mentioned facts, diquat is proved to be a unique and essential product for the seed production of potatoes, oilseed crops, maize and a number of minor seed production crops. The active substance is necessary to ensure reliable, secure crops and high-quality seed supply for many species and keep the seed production in Europe. Therefore, the European Seed Association is asking European Commission and Member States to take this information in due account when considering the renewal of authorisation of diquat.**