

Paris, 03/21/23

Dear Editor,

You may have been aware of the controversies that, mainly due to the present ecological disaster, have arisen in France and Europe about the use made of too many pesticides, particularly in the agricultural world. Among these pesticides, the use of SDHI, known since 70's to interfere with cellular respiration, are currently questioned by many scientists, especially in France<sup>1</sup>. The financial stakes are considerable and any data reported on the subject are extremely sensitive and scrutinized. In such a context, scientific journals obviously have to pay particular attention to the existence of competing interest which could lead to questioning the value of reported results.

With regard to Scientific reports, I noticed that it has published an article<sup>2</sup>, should I say an advertisement (?) describing, in a surprising way to say the least, the action of an »SDHI, Fluoropyram, as being specific to nematodes, whereas it was previously reported as having no particular specificity at least in its mode of action<sup>3</sup>. Additionally at least two papers (*plus* the files requested for European authorization of the molecule) reported the formation of thyroid and liver tumors in rodents. That, whatever is the mechanism of tumor formation, demonstrates that Fluoropyram is far to only act on nematodes. Next to what appears to be a cover-up, this study is published with a note underlining the absence of competing interest (« The authors declare no competing interests »), despite the fact that 2 of the 4 addresses listed indicate Bayer or BASF as employers<sup>4</sup>.

It is difficult for me to imagine a more obvious competing interest. To my knowledge, disclosure of competing interest should allow the reader to evaluate the nature of any relationship between the authors and commercial entities that may have a competing interest in the information presented in the published manuscript.

In the tense context surrounding the SDHIs, I think this deserves an extremely rapid reaction from the journal, *eg* the withdrawal of this article from the journal, or a note informing readers, in an equivalent manner in the journal, of the existence of such a major problematic conflict of interest. The incompleteness of the bibliography which one could dream to be (hardly indeed, given the context) « involuntary » could (should) be corrected on this occasion.

Finally, having myself co-authored five articles published in Scientific Reports and being very attached to the probity of scientific journals, I hope that the situation can be resolved very quickly before it leads to harmful publicity.

Cordially,

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<sup>1</sup> ([https://www.lemonde.fr/sciences/article/2020/01/21/pesticides-sdhi-450-scientifiques-appellent-a-appliquer-le-principe-ne-de-precaution-au-plus-vite\\_6026712\\_1650684.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/sciences/article/2020/01/21/pesticides-sdhi-450-scientifiques-appellent-a-appliquer-le-principe-ne-de-precaution-au-plus-vite_6026712_1650684.html), or <http://endsdhi.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Appel-Liste.pdf> additional information available at <http://EndSDHI.com>).

<sup>2</sup> Schleker ASS, *et al.* Mode of action of fluopyram in plant-parasitic nematodes. *Sci Rep.* 2022 Jul 13;12(1):11954.

<sup>3</sup> Bénit P *et al.*, Evolutionarily conserved susceptibility of the mitochondrial respiratory chain to SDHI pesticides and its consequence on the impact of SDHIs on human cultured cells. *PLoS One.* 2019 Nov 7;14(11):e0224132

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