



HB 91 Agriculture - Neonicotinoid Pesticides – Prohibitions

MGPA Position: **OPPOSED**

Committee: E&T

Date: February 4, 2026

The Maryland Grain Producers Association represents the farmers in Maryland who grow the nearly one million acres of corn, wheat, barley, sorghum, triticale, and soybeans across the state, contributing nearly \$1 billion in direct sales to the Maryland economy.

MGPA opposes HB91, which would ban the sale, distribution, and use of corn, soybeans, and wheat seeds treated with neonicotinoid pesticides.

Neonicotinoids are important to grain production as a seed treatment applied before planting. Nearly all corn seed planted in Maryland and the majority of soybean seed is treated and helps to protect the crop from rootworm, cutworms, flea beetles, white grubs, and wireworm, all of which can be devastating to seeds before they emerge from the soil. The use of seed treatments translates to less pesticide use because it reduces the need for application after the seed is planted.

Seed treatments are important because they protect the seed from soil pests that are often times not evident until after the seeds do not grow; this is referred to as “pre-emergent loss.” Farmers planting untreated seed report experiencing between 30–50% pre-emergent loss. Unfortunately, there is no rescue treatment of pesticides once that pre-emergent loss is experienced, and the only remedy is to re-plant. Re-planting an acre of corn will cost farmers in Maryland between \$130–\$170 per acre. If a farmer chooses not to replant or is unable to due to seed availability or timing, this could be a \$400 or more loss per acre for corn farmers.

The corn, soybean, and wheat seed markets are national markets, not regional or even state-based markets. Over 90% of corn seed sold in the U.S. is treated with neonicotinoids. While seed companies may be willing to special treat seeds for large volume markets, Maryland is a very small market representing less than 1% of the total row-crop acreage. Seed companies will not special inventory non-treated seed for the Maryland market. This will result in reduced availability of seed options for Maryland growers and potentially not enough untreated seed at all. While we appreciate the allowance for the Secretary of Agriculture to extend the ban if seed is not available or creates a financial hardship, this is not how the seed procurement timeline works. Many farmers have already ordered their seed for the fall 2026 planting season, and seed companies are on five-year planting cycles to ensure sufficient inventory. This creates uncertainty for both farmers and their agribusiness partners.

Many of our farmers are diversifying their operations to not only grow grain but also grow and sell seed. Having insufficient varieties and stock to sell will also impact their income from this second stream.

Maryland farmers are leaders in conservation implementation, with higher percentages of cover crops and no-till acres than any other state in the nation. Neonicotinoid seed treatments aid farmers in conservation implementation by protecting seeds from soil pests that are encouraged by the right organic matter environment that these conservation practices create. Peer-reviewed research shows that early-season seed protection is especially important in no-till and high-residue systems (van der Werf et al., 2018; Douglas & Tooker, 2015). If neonicotinoid seed treatments are not available, you may see farmers decreasing their acres of cover crop and no-till implementation in order to mitigate the additional pest risk they create and now cannot protect their crop from.



All of this is particularly troubling because banning the use of neonicotinoid treated seed is not supported by the science used in recent regulatory decisions. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has conducted updated pollinator risk assessments for neonicotinoids (2020) and released Proposed Interim Registration Decisions that incorporate new science on how bees and other pollinators can be exposed. These assessments consider exposure routes including seed treatments. The Proposed Interim Decision did not include any new limitations or mitigations for neonicotinoid treated seed required for pollinator protection.

We believe that EPA has and continues to take the necessary steps to protect pollinators from any potential impact of neonicotinoid pesticides. Our farmers strictly follow EPA guidance, and the science continues to support the correct use of neonicotinoid treated seed.

MGPA respectfully asks for your unfavorable report on House Bill 91.

For more information, please contact:
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