

Jeroen Candel addresses MEPs on biodiversity and pesticides

Associate professor of Public Administration and Policy Jeroen Candel addressed members of the European Parliament on the biodiversity crisis and the need to reform the food system, but his message appeared to fall on deaf ears. 'It felt a bit like the film *Don't Look Up*.'

Candel was invited by the organizers of the European citizens' initiative Save Bees and Farmers. On 24 January, members of the initiative handed a petition with over a million signatures to the European Parliament in Brussels during a hearing. The signatories call on the EU to reduce the use of pesticides by 80 per cent by 2030, rather than by 50 per cent as envisaged in the Farm to Fork strategy. Last December, Candel also started a petition among European scientists calling for the pesticide regulation not to be delayed. Over 700 scientists signed his petition.

Candel has mixed feelings about the hearing. 'It was good to be there on behalf of the scientific community to stress the urgency of the problems relating to biodiversity and to call on politicians to take action.' But he also found it frustrating that a lot of politicians in the main parties didn't seem to be listening and appeared focused on preserving the status quo. 'It felt a bit like the film *Don't Look Up*: how much clearer do I need to be?'

More pressure

Candel thinks the pressure on Brussels should be increased. The EU's Green Deal shows this works. 'That deal came about because citizens throughout Europe took to the streets to campaign for the climate. The same combination of mobilization, media attention and protests is needed to get politicians to change course on this issue. That's why



Jeroen Candel addressing the European Parliament (EP). Still from the EP's recording.

I am pleased with this citizens' initiative.' He sees two roles for academics. 'On the one hand we need to keep up the pressure and show we are monitoring this issue, while on the other hand we should offer our help. Our Wageningen know-how can help policy-makers formulate effective policies.' ss