

EU urged not to compromise pesticide restrictions in the interests of trade

Robert Hodgson, [12 Mar 2020](#)

Environmental campaigners have urged the European Commission not to allow imports of food tainted with pesticides whose use is banned in the EU, citing reports of diplomatic pressure from the US and Canada.

Acceptable limits, or 'import tolerances', are set out in the 2005 regulation on maximum residue levels of pesticides in or on food and feed of plant and animal origin, which is currently being discussed in closed committee.

The NGOs, including Friends of the Earth Europe and Pesticide Action Network Europe, note the regulation allows the EU to define a permissible level of residues for pesticides that are not approved for use in the EU in order to “meet the needs of international trade”.

“However, there is no legal obligation for the EU to set such 'import tolerances', as confirmed also by the Scientific Service of the German Bundestag,” they wrote in an open letter to health and food safety commissioner Stella Kyriakides dated 11 March.

Moreover, the regulation prohibits the setting of import tolerances for pesticides banned on public health grounds, including those classed as mutagenic, carcinogenic or toxic for reproduction, and substances considered to be endocrine disruptors.

“We urge the commission to fully implement these legal provisions, without any exceptions,” they write, asking the EU executive to extend this prohibition the pesticides banned on environmental grounds, which would include those harmful to pollinators.

The letter refers to commitments in the European Green Deal to reduce the EU's reliance on pesticides. It calls on the commission to block imports of any produce bearing traces of pesticides for which “harmful effects on human or animal health or unacceptable effects on the environment cannot be ruled out”.

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Follow-up: Open [letter](#); Bundestag [report](#); Corporate Europe Observatory [report](#); public [summary](#) of 17-18 February committee meeting, [agenda](#) for 24 March