

PanE

winter 2017

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IN THIS NEWSLETTER, WE WISH TO HIGHLIGHT
SOME OF THE MANY REGIONAL ACTIONS
THAT ARE OCCURRING IN
THE FIGHT AGAINST PESTICIDES

**We hope that these actions encourage and inspire
you in your own journey against pesticides.**

**If you know of interesting actions or would like to be
involved yourself, please be in touch with us!**



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DENMARK

MARCH AGAINST POISON RAIN

In Denmark, on October 1 between 10am and 12am a collective march to protest against rain poisoned with prosulfocarb took place across the country. The National Association for Practical Ecology, which is leading a campaign “Poison rain-no thanks!”, encouraged people to arrange local walk carrying over their heads umbrellas adorned with apples as a sign of need to stop toxic rains over their private houses.

The march was very successful. In over six places in the country, members and citizens participated to beautiful walks in the local countryside. It was a nice occasion to enjoy the nature and discuss about the future steps of their campaign against prosulfocarb.

The Association is trying to create awareness about the problems caused by the spread of prosulfocarb that, by raining, is contaminating fruits and vegetables. In September and October, the monitoring stations in Risø and Sepstrup commonly register a highest concentration of prosulfocarb in rainwater. It is during these months that prosulfocarb brought out on conventional winter wheat fields, and it is during these months that harvests are bursting in the Danish gardens.

Hence, toxic rains are obstructing organic cultivations and local people cannot guarantee what is raining over their crops and in the past three years there have been found pesticides residues both on conventional and organic products.

For all these reasons, people are protesting to achieve the total ban of prosulfocarb.

It is not an attempt to create a hot-tempered mood up or to threaten the population not to eat apples anymore. They helped to articulate an issue that many did not know - and many are still unaware of it.

A photograph of a blue tarp in the foreground, partially covering a view of a lake and a cloudy sky. On the tarp, there is a poster with the text 'Giftragn NEJ TAK' and an image of a fruit. There are also some yellow flowers on the tarp. The background shows a body of water and a distant shoreline under a grey, overcast sky. In the top right corner, there is a small branch with red berries.

A summary of the fight in Denmark

by Nora Tams – Danish Society of Nature Conservation, Odsherred

Since 1998, the usage of pesticides in public areas in Denmark has been reduced by over 90%. Fortunately, most municipalities stick to this out-phasing of pesticides and some enhance the fight by ensuring that groundwater is protected against pesticides.

In the spring, the municipality of Egedal for example – as the first in the country – applied a special paragraph to protect the drinking water in a protected area of 67 hectares by the village Søsum. Initially, this was met with big resistance but the municipality stands firm in its decision.

The municipality of Lejre – which for many years has made a targeted effort towards a more sustainable management of nature in collaboration with Danish Society of Nature Conservation – stands as an example of how we can work with nature in an environmentally friendly way.

Other good examples are Aarhus, Aalborg and Skanderborg.

Aalborg

The subsoil in Aalborg is vulnerable to poisons and insecticides. Therefore struggling municipality and its citizens against the use of pesticides and clean drinking water. The subsoil in Aalborg consists of sand and chalk with cracks and crevices and does not have a protective layer of clay. This means that rainwater seeps into the groundwater - and so does the pesticides we use in the garden. It goes beyond the water we drink in the future. There are not used pesticides in public areas in Aalborg. But we must protect our water, we also need your support. Help keep the groundwater clean and drink clear - do not use pesticides in the garden!

Aarhus

State and City Council work together to plant public woods. A total of 221 hectares of public woods has been planted within the municipality's boundaries over the last 5 years - 130 ha owned by the state and 91 by the City Council. Planting new woodland has three primary objectives: Protecting water supplies, as switching farmland to woodland means an end to the use of pesticides. It reduces the risk of polluting our drinking water drawn from the groundwater. It creates recreational areas for local residents and ensures biodiversity through provision of the optimum living conditions required for fauna and flora.

Egedal

In the future, 25 homeowners and 8 farmers in the municipality of Egedal will not have permission to use pesticides in a new area of protection. This is to protect drinking water against pollution potential. Citizens have today received a letter about the decision, which also includes an offer of compensation.

Progress has not always been easy...

During 2015-16, the Danish legislation on out-phasing of pesticides in public areas has been put under pressure again. My own municipality, Odsherred, stopped the application of pesticides in public spaces in 2010. In 2016, however, a political majority chose to return to the practise of using pesticides, as it was thought to be a cheaper solution – yet it turned out that fighting weeds with pesticides is more expensive than first assumed.

In the region Sjælland, the fight against pesticides was not just temporarily lost in Odsherred. The municipalities of Holbæk and Slagelse have also gone back to using pesticides and the municipality of Kalundborg is considering doing the same.

The following link shows a news report from TV Øst.
<http://www.tveast.dk/nyheder/27-02-2016/1930odsherred-vil-bekaempe-ukrudt-med-sprojtegifte?autoplay=1>

What can be done

The development in the public sector can work as an incentive for private and receptive citizens to refrain from using pesticides. Therefore, it is important to continue the out-phasing of pesticides in public spaces. We must stop using pesticides and stop buying products that contain pesticides or are produced by help of pesticides. We have to continue spreading awareness around the fact that it is very risky to use poison as a problem-solver. Finally, we have to support the good initiatives that for example PAN-Europe and Danish Society of Nature Conservation stand for. **Good fight!**

Nora Tams

Danish Society of Nature Conservation, Odsherred



ITALY

A Field Observation of the Pesticide ban in Malles Venosta Camilla De Nardi

In September, I went visiting Malles Venosta, a tiny village with a loud voice against pesticides. This was my first task with PAN Europe and it helped me to become familiar with the organisation.

Malles Venosta is located in South Tyrol, a northern region of Italy mainly known for its production of apples and for its beautiful mountains. However, behind the glittering apples there is a dark system of production. Many entrenched interests are involved in maintaining a conventional system of production based on intensive application of pesticides. Consumers are the unfortunate recipients of this system.

While in Malles Venosta, I had the opportunity to collect local testimonies and was able to get a clear picture of what it means to run a campaign against pesticides. Johannes Fragner, the official spokesman of the campaign and owner of the local pharmacy, provided me a detailed description of how pesticides are used in Bolzano and Trento provinces. In 2014, ISTAT



published a report on the quantity of active phytosanitary substances used per hectare per year back to 2011. The two provinces of Bolzano and Trento together reported an amount of more than 40 kg of active substances per hectare per year ([ISTAT, Trentino Corriere Alpi](#)). This data is impressive when compared to nation use in Italy. According to a WWF article published in July 2016. **“Our country is the main consumer of pesticides per cultivated area in the whole of Western Europe, with a total consumption of 5,6 kg of pesticide per hectare per year”** ([WWF](#)). This has a tremendous effect on the ecological biodiversity and on the health of the inhabitants. An increase of infertility and cancer incidence is highly suspected. The Province is carefully keeping official data about this issue unpublished and the studies ruled are extremely approximative, as reported by the oncologist Patrizia Gentilini ([Report](#)).

Koen Hertoge, a board member of PAN Italy and citizen of Malles Venosta, described to me the developments and milestones of the campaign. Ecological and health motivations inspired the

people of Malles Venosta to ban pesticides. As Koen reported, it took many years to build a collective consciousness about the negative impacts of pesticides. The supporters of this movement had to face lots challenges. In the beginning, some citizens were skeptical of the possible results of the ban that perhaps it could harm production. Others were simply afraid to express their ideas.

Finally, in August 2014, a referendum occurred. The question was the ban of poisonous and dangerous pesticides for human health and for the environment in the community of Malles Venosta.

As expected with any change, the referendum created some conflicts within the community. It also reached the attention of some regional politicians who attempted to stop the referendum to avoid the beginning of an “inconvenient” movement to ban pesticides within the whole region.

A counter campaign was especially ruled by the industrial farmer organization Coldiretti. Coldiretti considered the referendum in Malles Venosta “against the law” as it banned “inoffensive” pesticides that are “recognized by the Italian government”, as Johannes pointed out. Although Coldiretti used pressure to influence the coordinators of the campaign, any attempts of persuasion failed. The campaign was very successful and the 76% of voters approved the ban. In accordance with the Italian law, the ban simply restricted the use of

pesticides within 50 meters distance to neighbouring properties. However, Koen explained that the ban was nearly complete as land holdings in Malles Venosta are small. In urban areas, such as parks, school gardens and cemeteries, the restriction was complete.

Malles Venosta is not quite pesticide-free yet. The mayor of the village, Ulrich Veith, is required to take part in a legal suit filed by the counterparty. If the referendum is upheld, in two years, all conventional farmers would have to transition to organic methods. At that time, Malles Venosta would finally be able to declare itself pesticide-free. When I met Ulrich, he was very positive about the results of the legal case and dedicated to the value of being pesticide-free.

People in Malles Venosta insist on the transparency of this campaign. Their interests are purely ecological and health-based rather than political. I believe the campaign in Malles Venosta is an extraordinary effort and its example might be a first step towards a pesticide-free environment across Europe. However, local actions alone cannot always win against the huge agro-industrial lobby and small villages face heavy opposition in banning internationally protected chemical products. Something must also change at a European level.



It was for me a great opportunity to be there and to receive everybody's enthusiasm and ideals. As Johannes said: "in order to build up successful plans for the future, it is necessary to start from the present. Change cannot be radical but it requires little steps, passion and perseverance", just as citizens in Malles Venosta are doing.



How to Protect Ourselves

What may be of interest to our members is a WWF report published in 2012 that focused on the Italian region of Veneto, renowned for its production of Prosecco. It is a very well made and interesting booklet and does much to inform citizens about the dangers of pesticide use in the region. It can be found here (Italian) and here is a quick summary of some of the main points.

Pesticides have serious impact on human health. They are a potential cause of cancer, problem to the reproductive system, endocrine issues, mutagen consequences and so on. Data reported that between 2007 and 2011 in the area of production of prosecco the number of cancers increased from 1:24 to 1:19,7.

Children are the most exposed to pesticides. They are continuously in contact with the ground and they are less likely to be hygienic. Mammal milk is another possible risk. In the areas where industrial agricultural practices are frequent, mother's milk tends to be contaminated. More than adults, children are sensitive to pesticides as their bodies are less able to metabolize toxic substances.

The report also pointed out the lack of legal protections of farmers to pesticides. Farmers are required to wear total body protections at the moment they are treating with pesticides. However, they are not required to wear any protection while working in sprayed vineyards in the following days. Thus, they are continuously exposed to pesticides contamination. A test compared samples of farmers' urine took after the treatment of pesticides and samples took after a usual working day in the vineyards. Researchers reported that in the first samples, the levels of contamination were four time higher. Local people who are living close to vineyards are also, unfortunately, high recipients pesticide exposure.

To he publication by WWF in prosecco:

andiamoavantitornandoindietro.jimdo.com/campagna-informazione/

The manual provides proper advice to prevent exposure to pesticides:

Let air circulates in your homes frequently, except for the moment of pesticides treatment

Farmers have to avoid contact with the cultivations for at least two days after the pesticides treatment

Farmers are obliged to announce a day in advance of pesticides treatment and to display visible signs that can inform the neighbours

Forbid children to play in the gardens during the period of pesticides treatment: April – September

Protect gardens in case they are close to conventional vineyards

Wash the fruit and vegetables with sodium bicarbonate to clean all the toxic residues

Avoid bike tours around vineyards in spring and summer

Be careful of pets during pesticides treatment

Make sure the wine consumed has not been exposed to pesticides

According to the report, mayors are responsible for their citizens' health and they have the duty to regulate controls on pesticides. In order to prevent the arise of cancers, authorities should properly faced with their potential causes. It is not a matter of dealing with the problem, it is a matter of preventing it.

The environmental heritage of Veneto has been damaged, as the report points out. Local hills have been transformed into industrial vineyards and the whole territory has deteriorated environmentally and aesthetically. Biological agriculture in respect of nature and health is one of the solutions to overcome this problem.

Italy Places Major Restrictions on the use of GLYPHOSATE

In August of this year, Italy's Ministry of Health decided to severely limit the use of glyphosate. The Italian restrictions ban the use of Glyphosate in areas frequented by the public or by "vulnerable groups" including children and the elderly. The list of banned areas includes parks, gardens and courtyards, the edges of roads and railways, urban areas, sports fields and recreational areas, playgrounds and green areas within the school buildings, and areas adjacent to health facilities.

In addition, the pre-harvest use of Glyphosate--a process known as desiccation--is banned. The desiccation of crops by spraying glyphosate is a primary source for residual pesticide contamination at the consumer level. Finally, the non-agricultural use of glyphosate is banned on soils composed 80% or more of sand--a measure designed to protect groundwater from contamination.

Recommendations on the Future for Pesticide Policy

The International Trade Centre's SustainabilityXchange hosted a forum "Identifying Best Practices for Reducing The Use and Impacts of Agrochemicals." The recommendations of the forum were:

Conducive policy environment needed

Several contributors pointed out that enhancing the use of good agricultural system design, practices and technologies that lead to reduced use of agrochemicals also requires a conducive policy environment.

Measures include:

- 1 Monitoring the use of agrochemicals, and systematic research on their impact;
- 2 Banning or phasing out highly hazardous pesticides;
- 3 Farmers should require a 'license' to be able to purchase a pesticide and need to follow regular trainings to be able to renew their license;
- 4 Enhancing research on how to re-design farming systems (agro-ecology, robust varieties, alternative crop protection methods) and conducting trials to test and demonstrate their effectiveness;
- 5 Promoting Integrated Pest Management and the use of alternatives;
- 6 Increasing demand for low/no pesticide products by engaging brands and retailers to revise their sourcing policies (applying minimum requirements on supplies, increasing the share of sustainability labelled products, introducing resistant varieties);
- 7 Raising awareness on pesticide issues among consumers, managers and other decision makers (fact-based information on health and environmental issues, and on available alternatives);
- 8 Revising regulatory practices and policies so that they incentivize pesticide use reduction and the development of alternatives (e.g. developing national action plans, improving transparency in pesticide regulation, introducing a pesticide tax, investing in research and education on alternatives);
- 9 Fast-track/support biopesticide registration in order to address the lack of approved, registered non-chemical products for pest management;
- 10 Voluntary Standards Systems need to permit the use of biopesticides
- 11 Extending availability of existing non-chemical products to more countries.

The result of the forum was published online: [SustainabilityXchange forum](#)



SWITZERLAND

The Swiss Parliament's refusal to ban glyphosate

This summer, the EU voted to restrict the use of glyphosate because of scientific evidence suggesting health risks associated with its use.

In Switzerland, Greenpeace, in collaboration with other associations and more than 25,000 people proposed to ban the agricultural chemical glyphosate. A widespread presence of pesticides has been discovered in Swiss agriculture, as Philippe Schenkel from Greenpeace mentioned. Some analyses reported that traces of glyphosate have also been found in several Swiss wines and beers.

In addition, the Swiss broadcaster RTS reported that glyphosate was found in the urine of 40% of participants in a study carried out in French-speaking Switzerland.

Already in 2015, the largest Swiss supermarkets Coop and Migros stopped selling any glyphosate-treated product that could be a risk for their customers' health.

However, the proposed petition was ignored by the Swiss Parliament. It was considered unfounded as scientific evidence to justify the toxicity of the commercialised pesticides were missing (see). The Swiss federal health office (BAG) declared that, based on current datas, "traces of glyphosate coming from the use of this product as a weedkiller are harmless to the public".

In conclusion, in Swiss farmers are still using the weed-killer glyphosate, a substance that has been recently discussed all over Europe for its unsafety and possible cancer risk.



Look out for important issues of concern
We want to hear from you via our social media platforms
pan-europe.info / pesticide-free-towns.info



Pesticide
Action
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