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**Pesticide
Action
Network**
Europe

Ms Jutta Urpilainen
European Commissioner for International Partnerships
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Open letter

Subject: EU Commission needs to take action regarding the alliance between FAO and CropLife International

Dear Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen,

(Cc. Vice-President Timmermans),

The EU being an important member of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations (UN), we are writing to you concerning the unacceptable partnership that FAO has established with CropLife International, the umbrella organisation of the world's biggest pesticide companies¹.

The partnership between the EU and FAO is very much needed and it is important for FAO to continue its activities to support farmers to develop in third countries in an autonomous manner. We are nevertheless highly concerned that FAO director general Qu Dongyu signed a letter of

¹ http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/newsroom/docs/CropLife.pdf

intent in October 2020 with CropLife International to officialise a collaboration. In a report² made to the 49th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur Michael Fakhri recommended the FAO Council “to review the agreement with CropLife International with an eye to human rights concerns” and “to consider directing the Director-General of FAO to rescind the agreement.”

Every year, 44% of farmers, worldwide, face acute intoxications to pesticides, mostly to highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs)³. CropLife members promote the sales of such toxic pesticides in developing countries, most of them being banned in the EU. In addition, in such countries, farmers do not dispose of the needed knowledge or protective materials such as the ones used in the EU. Furthermore, pushing farmers from developing countries to make use of pesticides, hybrid seeds and GMOs is contrary to the very idea of allowing farmers to produce safe food in an independent way. Agroecology is the only way we have to produce healthy food, while preserving resources, in a safe, affordable, and chemical-free way and CropLife international I opposed to this concept.

The European Union is a major voluntary contributor to FAO. We oppose the fact the EU supports a UN agency that is developing such a partnership. Such collaboration is socially, environmentally and politically utterly shocking.

In the EU, 1.2 million citizens have supported the Save Bees and Farmers European Citizens Initiative (ECI)⁴. Such ECI is asking for a phasing out of all synthetic pesticides by 2035, a restoration of biodiversity in agricultural areas and a massive support for farmers to transition towards agroecology. Out of the 7 successful ECIs in the history of the EU, this is already the second anti-pesticides ECI, the first one being the 'Stop glyphosate' ECI in 2017. The democratic signal is very clear. Furthermore, in the frame of the European Green Deal, the European Commission has committed itself to reduce pesticides' use and risk in the EU by 50% by 2030⁵. The Commission also committed to reduce the most toxic pesticides, part of them being HHPs, by 2030 as well. So while we, at Europe-level, are working to improve the state of the environment and citizens' health while preserving our resources, it is unacceptable that EU money is supporting an organisation that collaborates with CropLife whose lobbying activities are pushing towards more pesticides, especially HHPs, and their terrible consequences for people's health and the environment.

In the frame of the European Green Deal, in its Chemical Strategy for Sustainability, the European Commission has committed to halt the export of EU-banned pesticides. For the sake of coherence,

²<https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F49%2F43&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

³ <https://pan-germany.org/pestizide/new-study-reveals-dramatic-rise-in-global-pesticide-poisonings/?print=print>

⁴ www.savebeesandfarmers.eu

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0381>

such an important decision cannot be countered by the EU supporting financially the FAO-CropLife collaboration.

Finally, after months of unanswered messages, we recently obtained a meeting with the FAO Deputy Director General, Beth Bechdol, to discuss this collaboration. However, it has been made very clear that the FAO had no intention of ending this partnership with CropLife. Even more alarming, the Letter of Intent signed in October 2021 has no limit in time, securing a special position to CropLife. Furthermore, the FAO rejects our requests for transparency on the meetings and agreements they have with the pesticide industry, consecutive to this partnership. This negligence and attitude of the FAO are unacceptable, and the EU must intervene.

We therefore respectfully ask you to condition the EU financing to FAO to the immediate severance of their collaboration with CropLife International.

We thank you in advance for your consideration.

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