

Brussels, 14 November 2023

Subject: Call upon Members of Renew Europe to support a Strong SUR at Plenary Vote, for the future of our farmers, citizens and biodiversity

Dear Members of Renew Europe,

We write to you to express our deepest concerns regarding attempts of members of your group to severely water down the proposal for a Regulation on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (SUR). The SUR is of very broad public interest, and will be determinative for the health, well-being and welfare of current and future generations.

For several reasons, the SUR proposal provides an opportunity policy-makers, citizens and farmers cannot afford to miss. **Sustainable farming practices leading to a healthy environment are the essential foundation of a prosperous future for EU farming and agricultural areas.**

1) Health of EU citizens and farmers

[Renew's priorities for 2019-2024](#) acknowledged: *"The equal access to health for our citizens will be at the heart of all our policies. We will work to deliver on citizens' expectations for a non-toxic environment with clean air and water and safe products free from hazardous chemicals..."*. **It is essential that Renew meets citizens' expectations, and supports a strong SUR, with effective and binding IPM rules and pesticide reduction goals, and ambitious protection of sensitive areas.**

There is broad scientific consensus that pesticides can severely impact human health, with farmers and their families being the first victims of pesticides' toxicity (Annex 1). Scientists acknowledge these impacts are greatly underestimated, as cumulative effects have been largely overlooked. People are impacted through different exposure routes (inhalation, ingestion, dermal absorption, indoor dust, ...), several of them not being part of the EU pesticides approval regulatory process. Pesticides are shown to drift over far distances, up to several kms. Recently published research of the EU Sprint Project shows that pesticide residues are pervasive in both agricultural environments and residential settings. Of the 600 samples analysed, 86% contained pesticides residues, while 76% contained mixtures of pesticides. In total, **197 different pesticides were found in the dust of houses**, with one house even containing 121 different pesticides. The majority of pesticides found in house dust are classified as 'highly hazardous' to mammals and linked to adverse human health effects. Scientific results thus show it is paramount to reduce all pesticides as much as possible.

2) Ecosystems are the foundation of farming and overall prosperity

[Renew's group charter](#) underlines “We need to take responsibility where others are doubting the ecological imperative. Because the reinvention of Europe will only make sense if future generations can live in a preserved environment and successfully make the transition towards sustainable and circular use of our finite resources.” [Renew's priorities for 2019-2024](#) highlight: “the EU must step up the protection of nature through an ambitious 2030 Biodiversity strategy aimed at halting and reversing biodiversity loss in Europe and globally. It should also fully exploit the co-benefits with Europe's climate action.” and “... the EU must address the drivers of biodiversity loss especially through its agricultural, fisheries, trade and energy policies,...”.

Healthy ecosystems and the services they deliver are a prerequisite for human well-being, resilient food production systems and a healthy economy. We rely on biodiversity for essential provisions, such as food production, healthy soil functioning, natural pest control, pollination, adaptation and mitigation to climate change, health and well-being, and to secure overall resilience of our environment and agricultural systems. Biodiversity and living ecosystems are also key in strengthening the attractiveness of agricultural areas in Europe: citizens don't want to spend time in monotonous deserts, in silent springs, while being continuously exposed to pesticides. The rise of the ‘experience economy’ shows that citizens highly value discovering biodiversity and wildlife.

The **dramatic decline in biodiversity^{1,2,3}** as well as the high level of [pesticide pollution](#) in water bodies and other ecosystems, ask for ambitious and binding measures. **Successful examples of farmers applying IPM, in diverse cropping systems across Europe, shows that the EU has the know-how to carry out the needed system change towards sustainable practices.** The current Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUD) did not lead to adequate protection of nature areas and water resources. **Sensitive areas need ambitious protection at EU level, to finally tackle the urgent threat of ecosystem collapse.**

3) Cost of inaction

The costs of not tackling health impacts and environmental degradation, far outweigh any predicted costs related to pesticide reductions. A recent [study](#) by the German government's Environment Agency found that the annual costs of biodiversity loss due to intensive agriculture alone in the country amounted to 50 billion euros – far outstripping the potential economic costs of implementing the needed legislation to protect and restore biodiversity. Another [study](#) estimated that the societal costs of pesticide use in France represent more than 10% of the 2017 annual budget of the French Ministry of Agriculture and Food. A [study of BASIC](#) shows that the costs directly attributable to pesticides, which are borne by our societies, are twice as high as the net profits for the industry.

4) Science and Citizens are clear

A [recent poll](#) (Annex 2) carried out by Ipsos in Denmark, France, Germany, Poland, Romania and Spain and published by PAN Europe, again shows the outspoken support of citizens for ambitious pesticide policies, with high agreement across the different member states. As

¹ [Hallmann et al., 2017](#). More than 75 percent decline over 27 years in total flying insect biomass in protected areas

² [Brühl et al., 2021](#). Direct pesticide exposure of insects in nature conservation areas in Germany

³ [Rigal et al., 2023](#). Farmland practices are driving bird population decline across Europe

many as 81,8% of respondents are concerned about the environmental impact of pesticide use, while 75,9% are worried about the impact of pesticides on their and their families health.

In 2022, [668 scientists](#) warned that “political efforts to abandon the sustainability targets of the Farm to Fork strategy (including pesticide use) do not shield us from the current crisis, they rather worsen it and make the crisis permanent”. Soon after, [739 scientists](#) called for an ambitious Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation, as “The heavy use of pesticides in agriculture is strongly linked to declines in insects, birds, biodiversity in terrestrial and aquatic systems and detrimental impacts on global public health”. Recently, [6000 scientists](#) expressed their support for the EU’s Green Deal, and rejected the arguments against the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation and the Nature Restoration Law. They highlight that restoring nature and reducing the use of agrochemicals is essential for maintaining long-term production capacity and enhancing food security.

Given all of the above, we respectfully though urgently ask you to support an ambitious SUR, to engage into science-based decision making, and to fulfil your duty to represent the public interest of current and future generations.

Your Sincerely,

Kristine De Schamphelaere, PAN Europe
Virginie Pissoort, Nature & Progrès
Clara Bourgin, Friends of the Earth Europe
Fabio Taffetani, PAN Italy
Lili Balogh, Agroecology Europe
Noa Simon, BeeLife
Nadine Lauverjat, Générations Futures
Susanne Smolka, PAN Germany

Annex 1

Farmers, farmworkers and inhabitants of agricultural areas are at particular risk of adverse health impacts by pesticides^{4,5}, with data showing higher concentrations of pesticides in their blood and increased genotoxicity. Pesticides are shown to **drift over far distances**, up to several kms. Links have been shown between pesticide exposure and **many illnesses**, such as forms of cancers (e.g. Non-Hodgkin lymphoma, multiple myeloma, skin melanoma, ovarian, breast, brain, lip and prostate cancers) and neurodegenerative disorders (Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease). Particularly vulnerable are also **women and children**, with pesticide exposure related to disturbances of the reproductive system^{6,7}, fertility disorders as well as neurodevelopmental alterations in newborns. Even low levels of pesticide exposure can interfere with the neurological and behavioural development of children (neonatal reflexes, psychomotor and mental development and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder).

Annex 2

⁴ Figueiredo et al., 2019. Spatio-temporal variation of outdoor and indoor pesticide air concentrations in homes near agricultural fields

⁵ Dereumeaux et al., 2020. Pesticide exposures for residents living close to agricultural lands: A review

⁶ Bretveld et al., 2006. Pesticide exposure: the hormonal function of the female reproductive system disrupted?

⁷ Farr et al., 2004. Pesticide use and menstrual cycle characteristics among premenopausal women in the Agricultural Health Study,

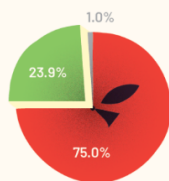
PESTICIDES: PLAY IT SAFE!

Opinion poll shows Europeans are opposed to gambling with pesticides.

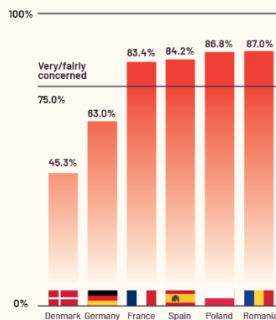
Citizens of Denmark, France, Germany, Poland, Romania and Spain representing the EU population, send these messages

HEALTHY FOOD AND FARMING

How concerned, if at all, are you about the healthiness of food items

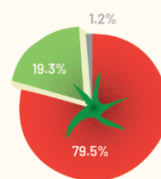


Very/fairly concerned
Not very/not at all concerned
N/A or DK

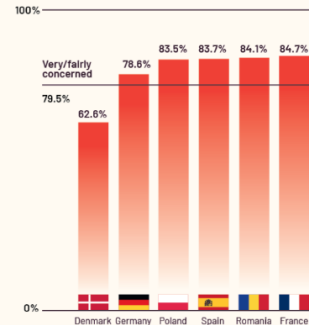


ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY FARMING

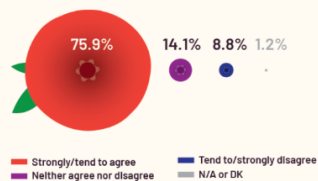
How concerned, if at all, are you about environmental impact of farming and food production methods



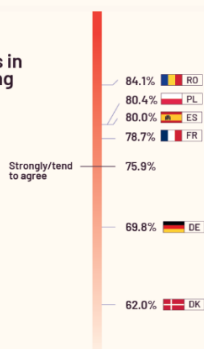
Very/fairly concerned
Not very/not at all concerned
N/A or DK



Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree?
I worry about how the use of pesticides in farming and food production is affecting my health/my family's health



Strongly/tend to agree
Tend to/strongly disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
N/A or DK



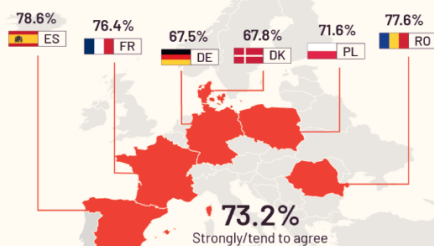
How concerned, if at all, are you about environmental impact of pesticides use in farming and food production

Very/fairly concerned
Not very/not at all concerned
N/A or DK



ENSURE MANDATORY IPM

Do you agree or disagree that IPM rules should be mandatory for farmers in the EU?



PUBLIC MONEY ONLY FOR PUBLIC GOODS NO FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR HARMFUL PRACTICES

Which of the following statements, if any, comes closest to your own view?

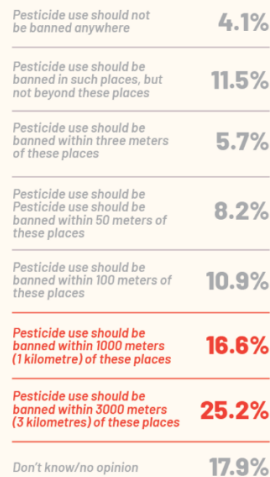


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PROTECT CITIZENS AND NATURE FROM PESTICIDE DRIFTS

Which of the following statements, if any, comes closest to your own view?

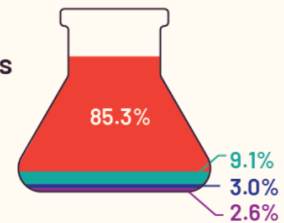


RESPECT PRECAUTIONARY APPROACH

Imagine that new scientific evidence emerges indicating that a particular pesticide may cause harm to human health and/or the environment.

Do you agree or disagree that the use of that pesticide should be halted by public authorities until more is known?

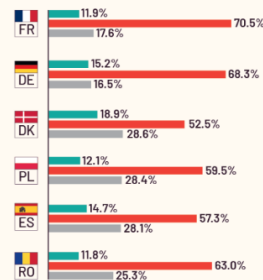
Strongly/tend to agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Tend to/strongly disagree
N/A or DK



NO GLYPHOSATE

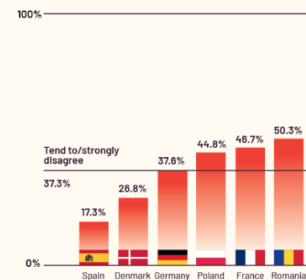
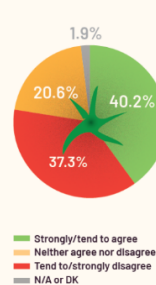
Given these different opinions, which of the following comes closest to your own view?

The use of glyphosate should continue to be allowed in the EU
The use of glyphosate should be banned in the EU
Don't know/no opinion



CAN WE TRUST OUR GOVERNMENTS?

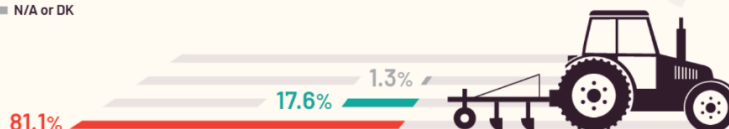
Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree? When it comes to making decisions about the use of pesticides, I trust the government to prioritise protecting the health of citizens and the environment



CLIMATE-NEUTRAL AGRICULTURE

How concerned, if at all, are you about impact of climate change on farming and food production

Very/fairly concerned
Not very/not at all concerned
N/A or DK



Pesticide
Action
Network
Europe