



Brussels, 8 June 2022

**To:** Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

**Cc:**

Mr Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal

Ms Stella Kyriakides, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

Mr Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

**Subject:** Call for a commensurate reply to the rising presence of the most hazardous pesticides in the EU.

Dear President von der Leyen,

Pesticide Action Network (PAN Europe) asks the European Commission to stick to its ambitions and timetable in the context of the revision of the [Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive](#) (SUD).

On 24 May, PAN Europe published a [report](#) highlighting an **increase of more than 50% in the presence of the most hazardous pesticides in fruits grown in the EU between 2011 and 2019, whereas these substances ought to be phased out over the same period**<sup>1</sup>. These findings show that Member States failed to meet their legal obligation under the Pesticide Regulation to substitute these [most hazardous substances](#) with safer alternatives for human health and environment. This [inaction](#) has strengthened the reliance of the EU agricultural system on the most hazardous pesticides, as well as increased citizens' exposure to them.

These *most* hazardous pesticides, linked to a range of chronic diseases or damage to the environment, are now expected to have their [use reduced by 50%](#) by 2030 in the context of the [EU Farm to Fork Strategy](#). Moreover, the substitution of the most dangerous chemicals became a guiding principle of the EU [Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Article article 50 of [Regulation \(EC\) 1107/2009](#).

PAN Europe's report has generated significant public concern throughout the European Union. Over two weeks after this publication, we are counting down more than 1,400 mentions in the press and numerous messages from European citizens. This confirms that the issue of pesticide regulation reaches more and more often and more closely European citizens, who keep calling for a drastic and quick reduction in their use in the EU. This has been reiterated in the context of the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#) and the ECI [Save Bees and Farmers](#), which calls for an 80% reduction by 2030 and a total elimination by 2035 of all synthetic pesticides. Such a discrepancy between citizens' demands and Member States' practices, requires a commensurate and quick policy response from the European Commission to eliminate these most hazardous pesticides in the EU food chain. In this regard, the EU Farm to Fork Strategy is setting the vision to drive this shift towards a safer and more sustainable food chain, but it is high time that this political commitment is translated into ambitious action and results in terms of pesticide use reductions.

In the context of the revision of the SUD, PAN Europe [calls](#) on the European Commission to propose that Member States deliver on the second legally binding target related to the most hazardous pesticides by finally substituting them with safer alternatives for human health and the environment. To that end, the European Commission should finally act on [its commitment](#) to revise the [guidance document](#) on substitution, which constitutes the main bottleneck to its implementation at the moment. Only such initiatives can reverse the upward trend of the use of the most hazardous pesticides highlighted in this report, and thus meet the objectives of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and even more. Indeed, the achievement of a whole range of the European Green Deal initiatives depends on the EU's ability to truly reduce pesticide use, including the Biodiversity Strategy towards 2030, the Zero Pollution Action Plan, the Soil Strategy for 2030, the EU Chemical Strategy for Sustainability.

**Therefore, we urge the European Commission to present no later than 22 June a proposal for revision of the SUD, ambitious enough to fully deliver the European Green Deal and meet citizens' demand in terms of pesticide use reduction.**

We remain at your disposal to exchange in more detail in the context of this letter .

Sincerely yours,

Koen Hertoge, President  
Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Europe