



To: members of the EU Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed

Brussels, 25/04/2024

Subject: Call for a ban of the PFAS active substance flutolanil and the withdrawal of national authorisations of PFAS pesticides

Dear members of the EU Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed,

I am writing on behalf PAN Europe to share with you our latest report, ***Message from the bottle***, revealing a dramatic rise in the concentrations of the 'forever chemical' trifluoroacetic acid (TFA) in European wines¹. These findings highlight the urgency to phase out sources of this significant yet largely overlooked pollutant, and particularly PFAS pesticides. With this letter, **we urge you to support the EU ban of the PFAS active substance flutolanil and immediately proceed to withdraw the national authorisations of all pesticide products containing PFAS active substances, as required by the EU Pesticide Regulation.**

TFA is an ultra-short per- and polyfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS) and a highly persistent and very mobile degradation product of some PFAS chemicals, including PFAS pesticides. The substance is also toxic for reproduction, i.e. may damage healthy early life development². TFA is ubiquitous in water resources with concentrations of several orders of magnitude higher than those of other PFAS. According to recent scientific warnings, TFA poses a serious threat to planetary boundaries, as most of the TFA released today will persist for future generations³.

In our latest report, TFA was detected in all 39 recent wines from 10 European countries, with concentrations reaching up to 320 micrograms per litre (µg/l) and an average concentration of 122 µg/l. This level is 100 times higher than the average TFA levels we measured previously in

¹ [Message from the bottle | PAN Europe](#)

² [Registry of CLH intentions until outcome - ECHA](#)

³ [The Global Threat from the Irreversible Accumulation of TFA | Environmental Science & Technology](#)

surface⁴ and drinking water⁵. In contrast, no traces of TFA were found in wines from vintages prior to 1988. A steep rise in contamination levels has been observed since 2010 to which the use of PFAS pesticides has contributed. An important finding is that the wines in the upper half of the TFA concentration range (mean: 176 µg/L) showed, on average, twice the pesticide load compared to those in the lower half (mean: 58 µg/L). This indicates a correlation between TFA levels and pesticide use.

According to scientific estimates, PFAS pesticides may account for up to 76% of annual groundwater contamination by TFA, followed by TFA emissions from rain (originating mainly from fluorinated gases used in cooling systems) at 17%, and contributions from wastewater treatment plants and manure at 3% each⁶. Currently, more than 30 PFAS active substances are authorised in pesticide products used in European agriculture; almost all are TFA precursors. These products are deliberately sprayed onto crops, contributing to PFAS contamination in food, soil, and water and are breaking down into TFA as a common metabolite.

This situation is now unacceptable and contrary to the European Pesticide Regulation 1107/2009, which aims to protect drinking water resources from pesticide pollution. According to Article 4(3) and based on the precautionary principle of Article 1(4), pesticide active substances and products placed on the market shall have no immediate or delayed effects on human health, directly or through drinking water, or on groundwater. More specifically, no authorisation shall be granted if the concentration of the active substance or of relevant metabolites in groundwater, may be expected to exceed the legal limit of 0.1 µg/L set out in the Groundwater Directive 2006/118/EC⁷.

As indicated by the European Commission⁸, TFA is a 'relevant' metabolite due to its proposed harmonised classification as toxic for reproduction under the CLP Regulation 1272/2008. Consequently, the 0.1 µg/L groundwater limit applies to TFA. Alarmingly, TFA contamination in groundwater routinely exceeds the 0.1 µg/L limit for relevant metabolites and in some cases surpasses even the 10 µg/L threshold for non-relevant metabolites in groundwater. This constitutes a clear indication that the requirements of the Pesticide Regulation, namely its Article 4(3) and Article 29(1)(e), and the Groundwater Directive are no longer met by pesticide products containing PFAS active substances. According to Article 44 (3,a) of the EU Pesticide Regulation, Member States are required to withdraw the authorisations of all the concerned products. Moreover, as our study shows, TFA is detected in much higher amounts in wine.

In December 2024, the European Commission proposed the non-renewal of the PFAS substance flutolanil⁹. TFA was identified as a major metabolite in crops during flutolanil risk

⁴ [TFA in Water: Dirty PFAS legally under the radar.pdf](#)

⁵ [TFA_The Forever Chemical in the Water We Drink.pdf](#)

⁶ https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/sites/default/files/medien/11850/publikationen/102_2023_texte_tfa.pdf

⁷ Points 2.5.1.2 of Part I of Regulation No 546/20112.

⁸ Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed Section Phytopharmaceuticals - Legislation 22 - 23 May 2024: "*TFA should be considered as a relevant metabolite in groundwater*" [[link](#)].

⁹ [Draft COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING REGULATION \(EU\) .../... of XXX concerning the non-renewal of the approval of the active substance flutolanil, in accordance with Regulation \(EC\) No 1107/2009.](#)

assessment¹⁰. Given the evidence of TFA potential to be toxic for reproduction and its exceptionally high persistence and mobility, flutolanil constitutes a clear risk for consumers and groundwater¹¹. This precludes its renewal. We urge you to support the Commission proposal during the meeting of the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (SCoPAFF) planned on 14 and 15 May. Moreover, in accordance with Article 44 (3,a) of the EU Pesticide Regulation, we urge you to withdraw the authorisations of all the PFAS pesticide products.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We trust you will make the right decision to protect our water resources, public health and the environment from further contamination by TFA.

Sincerely yours,

On behalf of PAN Europe

Angeliki Lysimachou
Head of Science and Policy
Pesticide Action Network Europe

¹⁰ EFSA, [Peer review of the pesticide risk assessment of the active substance flutolanil](#), June 2023.

¹¹ [Draft Renewal report for the active substance flutolanil](#).