

End pesticide use by 2035, say campaigners:

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The use of synthetic pesticides should be phased out by 2035 as part of a package of measures to support biodiversity, according to 80 campaign groups covering nature & environmental protection.

In a two-page missive* (dated March 31) to Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans, they call for the use of synthetic pesticides in EU agriculture to be cut by 2030 & phased out by 2035. This should be coupled with “ambitious targets to restore biodiversity, especially in agricultural areas,” they elaborate, emphasising that “agriculture & biodiversity are not mutually exclusive, but must benefit each other.”

The civil society groups, which include Slow Food Europe, CIWF, Friends of the Earth, European Environmental Bureau, Greenpeace, Corporate Europe Observatory, Pesticides Action Network, WWF, BeeLife, Bee Foundation & Pollinis, also want to see support for farmers “in the transition towards a nature-friendly agriculture.” CAP reform proposals must be “strongly upgraded to support farmers financially & technically by prioritizing small scale, diverse & sustainable farming based on agroecology,” they add.

In the letter, copied to Commissioners Stella Kyriakides (Health), Janusz Wojciechowski (Agriculture) & Virginijus Sinkevičius (Environment), the supporters of the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) ‘Save Bees & Farmers’, backed by over a quarter of a million EU citizens, say that the decline in pollinators has “rightly raised alarm in the scientific community & general public.” “Our food production model is a major driver of this ecology collapse, largely because of the massive use of synthetic pesticides,” they insist, adding that the chemicals “have important consequences on human health, linked to illness among rural communities as well as among consumers via pesticide residues that are present in food, as well as pesticide drift in the air & runoff in soil & groundwater.”

Pesticides, they say, are linked to “cancer, Parkinson’s disease, & reproductive impairments.” They also highlight a “sharp decline in social & economic diversity amongst farmers & rural communities,” because of industrial agriculture. “The EU has supported these phenomena with public money for decades through its CAP as well as with regulations, trade agreements & a research policy favoring industrial agriculture & food production,” they insist. Now they want to see fundamental change to a system “based on working with nature rather than against it.” They stress that “scientific research shows that feeding the EU & the world based on synthetic pesticide-free agriculture is possible.”

*<https://www.savebeesandfarmers.eu/eng/news/letter-to-executive-vice-president-of-the-eucommission/>