

Auditors slam European Commission for failing to protect pollinators

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The European Commission's attempts to protect pollinators have had little effect, while European pesticides legislation has been a major contributor to their decline, the EU's auditors have concluded.

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In a highly-critical report published on Thursday, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) said the commission has largely failed to make good on its pledge to address the decline in wild pollinators.

Its pollinators initiative, launched in 2018, was meant to make sure EU policies on the environment, pesticides, agriculture, cohesion and research worked together to protect pollinators, yet their abundance and diversity of pollinators has continued to decline due to intensive agriculture and the use of pesticides, the ECA has found.

The auditors concluded that the initiative "did not establish a legal framework" nor "trigger the allocation of specific financial resources" needed to make progress. They also noted that the 2020 biodiversity strategy and the proposed revisions to the Common Agricultural Policy do not include specific requirements for the protection of wild pollinators.

In addition, member states have kept granting emergency authorisations for the use of neonicotinoids responsible for the decline in pollinator populations, even though they have been banned since 2018. They have also **consistently blocked** the adoption of the 2013 guidance on the risk assessment of pesticides on honey bees prepared by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

"Pollinators play an essential role in plant reproduction and ecosystem functions, and their decline should be seen as a major threat to our environment, agriculture and quality food supply", said Samo Jereb, the ECA member responsible for the report. "The EU initiatives taken so far to protect wild pollinators have unfortunately been too weak to bear fruit."

The auditors recommend that forthcoming biodiversity, agriculture and pesticides legislation includes specific measures for wild pollinators, along with improvements to pesticides risk assessments.

In a briefing prior to the report's publication, they also warned that success will depend on national action plans and the commission's ability to monitor them.

Martin Dermine, environmental policy officer at Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Europe, said the report confirms the “schizophrenic [attitude](#) already displayed by the European Commission on such issues” as the EU “urgently” needs “to reconcile agriculture and biodiversity”.

Harriet Bradley, agriculture officer at BirdLife Europe, called for “a minimum of 10% mandatory space for nature on farms where wild pollinators can feed and breed,” as well as the ring fencing of €15bn per year in the CAP for biodiversity schemes.

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Follow-up: European Court of Auditors [report](#)