

REPORT: Opinion poll shows Europeans are opposed to gambling with pesticides and want policy-makers to play safe

European citizens are highly concerned about the use of pesticides and its effect on health and the environment. This is shown in a survey in six member states of the European Union - Denmark, France, Germany, Poland, Romania and Spain. The survey was conducted by the European Public Affairs team of the market research agency Ipsos and published by the Pesticides Action Network (PAN) Europe.

The impact of pesticides on respondents' and their families' health worries 75.9% of respondents. Respondents in Poland and Romania expressed the highest level of concern about the health impact of pesticides (80.4% and 84.1% respectively), while those in Denmark and Germany showed a somewhat lower level of concern (62% and 69.8% respectively).

As many as 81.8% of respondents are concerned about the environmental impact of pesticide use with modest divergence across the six member-states included in the survey. 77.7% of respondents agree that the use of pesticides is harming the environment, with the highest agreement in France (82.5%) and Poland (80.3%).

The survey participants expressed different levels of trust in national governments to prioritise people's health and the environment when deciding on the use of pesticides. Those in Spain and Denmark expressed the highest levels of trust. In contrast, around half of Romanians (50,3) do not trust their government to protect them against pesticides. This number is 46,7% in France and 44,8% in Poland.

The poll finds opposition to gambling with pesticides. The participants in the survey expressed a strong preference for a precautionary approach, instead. Three in five (59,0%) respondents agree that farmers should always use methods of preventing or controlling pests and diseases that carry the least risks for human health and the environment or else lose access to EU financial support. As many as 73,2% of respondents are in favour of making Integrated Pest Management rules - IPM (1) mandatory for farmers in the EU.

Further, the most preferred buffer zones between areas where pesticides are used and sensitive areas, such as schools, kindergartens, hospitals, elderly homes, nature-protected areas and water bodies are also the largest options offered by the survey, namely 1,000 meters and 3,000 meters. As many as 85,3% of respondents in the countries polled are in favour of halting the use of a specific pesticide if new scientific evidence emerges indicating that a particular pesticide may cause harm to human health and/or the environment - until more is known.

The majority of respondents (61.9%) believe that glyphosate, the most widely used herbicide in the EU, should be banned in the EU, with the figure rising to 70.5% in France and 68.3% in Germany. Dr Martin Dermine, Executive Director of the Pesticides Action Network (PAN) Europe, said: "European citizens don't want to take risks when it comes to their food, their health and the environment. These results are a clear call to policymakers to reduce pesticide use and to be much stricter in authorising pesticides".

The results of the poll show notable consistency in attitudes across different EU member states. In Poland and Romania, citizens express the same or a higher concern about the impact of pesticide use on health and the environment as in France and Germany.

Pesticide Action Network (PAN Europe) is a network of NGOs working to reduce the use of hazardous pesticides and have them replaced with ecologically sound alternatives. We work to eliminate dependency on chemical pesticides and to support safe sustainable pest control methods. Our network brings together over 45 consumer, public health and environmental organisations and women's groups from across Europe.



Press Release

Based on survey findings, the report recommends policymakers to:

- apply the precautionary principle, as requested by EU law, to assure a high level of protection of human health and the environment
- preserve and strengthen the key provisions of the proposed Sustainable Use Regulation of Plant Protection Products (2), including binding provisions on IPM and crop-specific rules
- protect sensitive areas by buffer zones made as wide as possible, at least in the range of 100-500m and preferably wider, given the available information on pesticide drift and the risk of pesticide exposure for human health and biodiversity
- support a ban on Glyphosate, given the substantial scientific evidence on risks for human health and the environment
- address current gaps in EU pesticide authorisation, to adequately protect citizens and the environment

This opinion survey was conducted in August 2023. by market research agency Ipsos, on behalf of Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Europe. The survey addresses various concerns related to farming, food production, and pesticides, as well as their impact on citizen's health and the environment. The six countries were chosen with a view to ensuring a good representative view of the EU and its geographical, climate, political and economic diversity.

Download the full survey report [here](#).

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Notes:

(1) [Integrated Pest Management \(IPM\) is a set of rules aimed at preventing pests or diseases in plants and reducing the need for pesticides. Under these rules, pesticides are used only as a last resort, if needed, after all other measures have been tried. IPM is already mandatory since 2014, but it is not enforced by EU countries.](#)

(2) [Proposed by the EU Commission in July 2022 as part of the Green Deal, the Regulation on the Sustainable Use of Plant Protection Products \(SUR\) includes EU-wide targets to reduce the use and risk of chemical pesticides by 50% in 2030.](#)

About us:

PAN Europe works to eliminate dependency on chemical pesticides. We support agroecological farming methods that prevent pests and if needed use safe sustainable pest control methods. A substantial reduction in pesticide use is urgent to improve public and workers' health and protect the environment. The precautionary principle should be leading, for it is the basis of the EU pesticides law.

PAN Europe's vision is to achieve high agricultural productivity of healthy food by truly sustainable agricultural production systems in which agrochemical inputs and environmental damage are minimised, and where local people control local production using local varieties.

We are the European branch of the Pesticide Action Network active in 60 countries worldwide working to minimise the negative effects of hazardous pesticides and to replace their use with ecologically sound and socially just alternatives. PAN Europe brings together 47 consumer, public health, and environmental organisations, trades unions, women's groups and farmer associations from across Europe.

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