

# Joint Press Release



Brussels, 18/04/2024

## Stopping the export of EU-banned pesticides won't harm the European economy & will benefit third countries

In the wake of the International Day for Peasant Struggles, a coalition of civil society organisations launches a [report](#) about the consequences of an export ban on pesticides not allowed in the EU.

Stopping the export of EU-banned pesticides would have a strong and positive impact on people's health and the environment in importing countries. Many peasant farmers and rural inhabitants are victims of pesticide poisoning. Contrary to what the pesticide lobby argues, an export ban would neither endanger employment nor burden the economy in Europe. These are the conclusions of a report, commissioned by a coalition of civil society organisations urging EU policymakers to act without further delay.

"The double standard on hazardous pesticides must come to an end. If they are too toxic here, they are toxic everywhere. There are no obstacles preventing the EU from adopting strict measures. An export ban will hardly affect the EU economy but will send a powerful message against the spread of toxic chemicals in third countries, where pesticide companies are exploiting lax legislation. The EU must act now." highlights Rina Guadagnini, policy officer at PAN Europe, on behalf of the coalition members.

The EU has prohibited some pesticides that seriously harm health and the environment from its territory. At the same time, it allows producing and exporting them. This causes great damage to health and the environment in other countries, especially for farmers and rural communities in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs) where regulations are weaker and hazardous pesticide use poses the greatest risks. The double standard is also unfair competition for farmers in the EU.

After committing to ban the export of these pesticides in 2020, the EU has been stalling, and even backtracking, under pressure from the industry, which fiercely opposes the adoption of an EU-wide export ban. The main [argument used by the industry](#) is that an export ban would harm the EU economy and create a massive job loss for pesticide producers while having no beneficial impacts for the protection of human health and the environment in importing countries.

### A negligible number of job losses

However, the thorough investigation presented in this report gives a completely different picture. "Based on the pesticide export data for the seven main European exporting countries, we calculated that the total number of jobs potentially at risk as a result of a hypothetical EU export ban would be as low as 133 jobs in 2018, or 1,07% of total employment in the sector, 213 jobs in 2021, and 173 jobs in 2022" explains Christophe Alliot of LeBasic and lead investigator of the report. This is not exactly shocking compared to the [198 million people employed](#) in the EU in 2022.

Further refining the analysis based on the experience with the French export ban<sup>1</sup>, the researchers

<sup>1</sup> The French government adopted a law in 2018 to prohibit the export of banned pesticides that entered into force in January 2022. But the ban applies to plant protection products "containing" substances that are not authorized in Europe, but not to the active substances themselves. In 2018 and 2019, the plant protection products lobby Phytéis lobbied several members of the French parliament with the argument that the pesticide ban jeopardised 2,700 direct jobs and 1,000 indirect jobs in their

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concluded that the total potential loss of employment would have accounted for 25 jobs in 2022 for the entire EU. In the end, no jobs might be lost at all as staff may be relocated or given different tasks. The export ban might also incentivise companies to invest in the production of safer sustainable alternatives.

While the negative impact on the EU's economy would be minimal, the positive impact on third countries would be significant. The EU is the leading exporter of pesticides worldwide. Therefore, stricter rules on the export of will have wide-ranging positive effects at the global level. Stopping the export of EU-banned pesticides would reduce exposure, and all related risks to the health of farm workers, rural populations and the environment.

Laurent Gaberell from Public Eye adds: "A ban will also inspire non-EU countries to follow and also prohibit the export of dangerous pesticides and other hazardous chemicals that are banned in their own jurisdictions. It would send a strong signal to governments and companies that such hazardous pesticides and chemicals should not be used anywhere in the world."

## Export ban will reduce pesticide residues in imported food

Another consequence of the double standard is a boomerang effect on food consumed in the EU. Imports of food from countries using banned substances exposes consumers to toxic pesticide residues. An export ban is one of the main conditions for implementing mirror measures on pesticides and protecting consumer's health.

Moreover, stopping the export of EU-banned pesticides is also essential to the coherence of the EU's trade policy, one of the stated goals of which is to better integrate sustainability challenges. It would also reflect the potential role of the European Union as a global benchmark setter for sustainable chemical regulation.

## About the coalition

The coalition is a group of NGOs working together to stop the EU exports of banned pesticides and other hazardous chemicals to third countries with weaker protection laws. The coalition has produced a [joint statement](#) urging the Commission to put an end to this double standard. Eleven members of the coalition commissioned the study "[EU pesticides export ban: what could be the consequences?](#)" to the [LeBasic](#). These are:

- [Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement \(CCFD\) - Terre Solidaire](#)  
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- [Dreikönigsaktion der Katholischen Jungschar \(DKA\)](#)  
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constituencies. Research by investigative journalists showed that the 2,700 direct jobs figure was unfounded and inflated. This led to an alert by NGOs and an official referral to the Senate Research Ethics Committee, the National Assembly Ethics Officer and the High Authority for Transparency in Public Life (HATVP). The inflated unemployment numbers ultimately led to the imposition of sanctions on Phytéis by the Parliament in May and June 2023 on the grounds that it failed to comply with its deontology obligations, notably because it provided deliberately inaccurate information intended to mislead MPs. The HATVP, which examined Phytéis' activities towards the government, considered that the letters had been drafted "more cautiously" than their letters to members of parliament, on which the decisions of the National Assembly and Senate were based.

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Read the full report: [EU pesticides export ban: what could be the consequences?](#)

Summaries available in [English](#), [German](#), [Spanish](#) and [French](#).

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## Notes:

Food security: [Hunger is again on the rise since 2015](#). In 2022, 735 million people faced hunger and 2,4 billion people were moderately to severely food insecure. 9.2% of the global population faced hunger in 2022, a serious increase from the 7.9% in 2015. Also, moderate to severe food insecurity went up from 21.7% to 29.6% over the same period.

Over the same period, global pesticide use increased from 3.26 million metric tons to 3.54 million metric tonnes, an increase of 8.5%. Global average consumption of pesticides increased from 2.11 to 2.26kg per hectare of cropland. Despite the increased use of pesticides in Africa and Latin America between 2015 and 2021, moderate to severe food insecurity increased considerably in both regions, whilst Latin America has the highest pesticide use in kg/ha. Hence the statement that the use of pesticides increases food security is not confirmed by global trends.

One of the main drivers of hunger and food insecurity is the lack of access to food, rather than the lack of production. Indeed, at a global scale, food production covers more than the needs of the world population.

At a global level, [many farmers and farm workers](#) suffer from pesticide poisoning every year. The need to reduce the use of HHPs and to end the export of toxic pesticides that have been banned at national level has had lately been supported by [Global Framework on Chemicals](#) and the UNEA resolution to eliminate the use of the world's most toxic pesticides globally. More information [here](#).

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