

EU citizens more at risk from pesticides show new EU statistics EU indicator on pesticides needs urgent reform

The European Commission just released¹ its latest indicators on pesticide use and risk for the year 2021. This comes on top of its publication² in July of the EU 2021 results towards Farm to Fork pesticide reduction targets. According to both publications, the use and risk of chemical pesticides would have decreased by 6% in 2021 compared to 2020. Yet, these figures are clashing with Eurostat's³ most recent data on sales for all pesticides which highlight an increase of 2.7% in 2021 compared to 2020. PAN Europe denounces DG Sante's misleading communication and calls again for a revision of its pesticide indicators.

Martin Dermine, executive director at PAN Europe said: 'The Commission tries to shine a positive light on these alarming figures but a 6% decrease in overall pesticide use and risk indicator means that EU citizens' exposure to toxic pesticides is actually not improving. Indeed, this Harmonised Risk Indicator 1 designed by the Commission and Member States 10 years ago is flawed and needs urgent reform. This 6% indicator decrease actually comes from bans on a few highly toxic pesticides such as reprotoxic Mancozeb, a commonly used fungicide, banned in 2021. In practice, as confirmed by Eurostat, farmers keep using toxic chemicals instead of moving to non-chemical agroecological practices'.

In the frame of the ongoing discussions on the European Commission proposal for a Regulation on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (SUR), PAN Europe and its members have been advocating to correct the flawed Harmonised Risk Indicator 1. Every time a pesticide is banned, by a trick in pesticides' toxicity weighting factor, it automatically gives the impression that there is a sharp decline in the use and risk, which is untrue. By communicating positively, PAN Europe considers that the European Commission deceives its own citizens.

Salomé Roynel, a Policy Officer at PAN Europe added: 'Data shows an unacceptable increase by 5% of the indicator for the most toxic pesticides between 2020 and 2021. Contrary to HR11, this indicator is only based on sales. It refers to over 50 pesticides called 'Candidates for Substitution' that Member States are supposed to gradually ban since 2015. Instead, this increase shows the little respect ministries of agriculture show for implementing EU law. It is high time that DG Sante ensures the enforcement of EU rules by Member States'.

Since 2015, Regulation (EU) 1107/2009 obliges Member States to gradually substitute Candidates for Substitution (CFSs) with less toxic alternatives. PAN Europe has shown in 2 reports⁴ that the residues of CFSs in EU food have increased over the last 10 years. No Member State implements the substitution principle and the European Commission fails to play its role to make sure that EU law is enforced at Member States' level.

Martin Dermine concluded: 'The increase by 41% of Harmonised Risk Indicator 2 corresponds to the important number of derogations provided by Member States to pesticides. A significant number concern pesticides that are normally banned in the EU for their toxicity. Recently, Romania just gave new derogations⁵ for the use of bee-toxic neonicotinoids on cereals, despite a ruling from the Court

¹ https://food.ec.europa.eu/plants/pesticides/sustainable-use-pesticides/harmonised-risk-indicators/trends-eu_en

² https://food.ec.europa.eu/plants/pesticides/sustainable-use-pesticides/farm-fork-targets-progress/eu-trends_en#

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/DDN-20230510-1>

⁴ <https://www.pan-europe.info/resources/reports/2022/05/forbidden-fruit-dramatic-rise-dangerous-pesticides-found-fruits-and>
<https://www.pan-europe.info/press-releases/2022/09/pesticide-paradise-how-industry-and-officials-protected-most-toxic-pesticides>

⁵ https://www.anfd.ro/central/omologare/temporar/autorizatii/2023/NUPRID_AL_600_FS.pdf

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.



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of Justice of the EU indicating that such derogations are not allowed."

In January 2023, PAN Europe published a report⁶ showing that Member States provide dozens of derogations to EU-banned pesticides every year, exposing their citizens and the environment to highly toxic chemicals. A ruling⁷ from the Court of Justice of the EU recently clarified that Member States were not allowed to give derogations to EU-banned pesticides. More than 6 months after the ruling, the European Commission still did not adapt its guidance document on derogations. PAN Europe has recently written⁸ to Commissioner Kyriakides to denounce this lack of reaction on the Commission's side.

Contacts: Dr Martin Dermine Executive Director, +32 486 32 99 92, martin@pan-europe.info

https://www.anfd.ro/central/omologare/temporar/autorizatii/2023/YUNTA_246_FS.pdf

https://www.anfd.ro/central/omologare/temporar/autorizatii/2023/PICUS_600_FS.pdf

⁶ <https://www.pan-europe.info/resources/reports/2023/01/banned-pesticides-still-use-eu>

⁷ <https://www.pan-europe.info/blog/groundbreaking-eu-court-ruling-should-stop-all-highly-toxic-pesticide-derogations-%E2%80%93-now>

⁸ <https://www.pan-europe.info/resources/letters/2023/07/eu-court-justice-ruling-c-16221-emergency-authorisations-not-implemented>

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