

Brussels 1 March 2022

## 8th SUD Symposium: Working with Nature

Hosted by MEPs: M. Hojsík, J. Guteland, S. Polčák, E. Evi, P. Kokkalis

**“An agriculture without chemical pesticides is possible in 2050”, the key message of today’s 8th SUD symposium “Working with Nature”, stated by guest speaker Christian Huyghe. Also the answer to the ongoing question: Is it possible to produce food without pesticides?**

Today, more and more farmers are switching to agroecology, proving that sustainable farming is possible. In addition to producing healthy food without harming the environment, these farmers often even earn more than their colleagues that produce pesticide-laden food. Thus, we discuss the question of why pesticides continue to be used and how a transition can be promoted.

Michael Hamell, University College Dublin opened the Symposium by addressing the long history of poor implementation of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUD). He points to many reports that highlighted the insufficient implementation of this important Directive, and underlines the crucial importance of understanding and defining what Integrated Pest Management (IPM) actually is.

Giorgos Rossides, Head of Cabinet of Stella Kyriakides, EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, acknowledged the need to reach the targets set in F2F (Farm-to-Fork) and BS (Biodiversity Strategy) within EGD (European Green Deal) - 50% reduction in the use and risk of chemical pesticides and 50% reduction in the use of more hazardous pesticides by 2030.

“Consumers expect to have healthy sustainable food, produced in sustainable ways, which do not harm our planet”, added Mr. Rossides. “Consumers must be able to make informed decisions, and farmers must be able to know they will be supported in this transition, and that their efforts will be rewarded”, continued Mr. Rossides.

Mr. Rosides gave an overview of the European Commission’s efforts to facilitate the transition toward agroecology. In the coming weeks, the European Commission will put forward a proposal so that chemical and hazardous pesticides become the last resort option. IPM needs to become the norm, the integral part of the transition. Farmers need to have access to expert advice and Member States will receive the support to make this happen. Data on pesticides use will be essential to reaching the reduction targets.

Commissioner Kyriakides has been committed to change in this area since the first day in her position, stated Mr. Rossides.

**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 40 consumer, public health, and environmental organisations, and women’s groups from across Europe.

**Martin Hojsik** agrees that transition to agroecology is possible, which is confirmed by many testimonials like that of Jean-Bernard Lozier, a French farmer: *“To achieve this social, economic and environmental sustainability, I believe integrated agriculture is the way forward”*. Mr. Hojsik is indignant by the attitude of Member States wishing to prevent the collection of data on pesticide use: *“Member states are doing everything to stop the access to information, to stop the proper data sharing, and I think that is really outrageous”*.

**Petros Kokkalis** rejected Member states’ fears about administrative burden related to data collection: *“There will be no additional administrative burden for MS or unjustified cost for farmers, because these data already exist, they just need to be brought to one place and become comparable and transparent to the public”*.

**Eleonora Evi** warns of very poor implementation of Sustainable Use of Pesticides among Member states where two-thirds of Member states have not implemented or revised their first National action plans.

*“The strong public support towards pesticide-free sustainable agriculture is also reflected in the successful ECI Save Bees and Farmers which last year collected 1 million signatures”*, added Eleonora Evi.

*“There seem to be various documents that the Commission, Council and Parliament have worked through over the last few years; there seems to be an interest to improve the situation with regard to pesticide use, with regard to sustainable agriculture. There is a tremendous need not to lose time, there is a tremendous need to have a full involvement both within the Council and within the Parliament; within Member States as they get to the Councils, and by the Parliamentarians talking to their constituents. A need for that dynamic to be translated into a much preferable situation, so that in the future we don’t find ourselves, 12 years after we started, in the same situation we had in the past”*, concluded **Michael Hamell**.

In conclusion, agroecology should be the basis of European future food production systems, with IPM as the foundation. In other words, agrotechnical practices such as crop rotation, the use of resistant varieties, intercropping, undersowing, etc., should be used regularly to avoid the development of conditions conducive to pest development. **The mandatory use of IPM will be the core, chemical pesticides will be really the last solution.**

You can find the Symposium recording [here](#).

**Contact:** PAN Europe, Henriette Christensen, [henriette@pan-europe.info](mailto:henriette@pan-europe.info)



**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 40 consumer, public health, and environmental organisations, and women’s groups from across Europe.