

## ENVI Committee Vote on Pesticides Regulation SUR

**Today Members of the European Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) upheld and partially improved the Commission's proposal for a regulation on the use of pesticides (SUR). The adopted compromise text includes some improvements, but still falls short on key provisions to protect citizens and the environment.**

With ENVI the leading committee on the file, the vote represents [a key step in the negotiation process](#) in the Parliament. The text approved in ENVI (47 votes in favour, 37 against and 2 abstentions) took on compromise amendments drafted and supported by most of Renew Europe, the Left (GUE/NGL), The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats and the Greens/EFA.

*"While the adopted text improves some aspects of the Commission's proposal, the provisions still fail to meet key demands of citizens and scientists", says Natalija Svrtan, policy officer at PAN Europe "The agro-industry interests voiced by some MEPs have in many ways prevented science-based decision making and prioritisation of the public interest." (1)*

Important is that the text approved still supports a regulation with legally binding definitions and obligations, despite the strong efforts to fully reject the proposal, or even change it into a directive.

*"The reduction goal for the most hazardous pesticides is increased to 65%. This is an improvement of the Commission proposal. However, these substances need to go as soon as possible and a full ban is needed by 2030", says Kristine De Schamphelaere, policy officer at PAN Europe. "It is also key that the voted text maintains binding provisions on Integrated Pest Management and crop-specific rules, so that farmers are obliged to adopt preventive and non-chemical methods as a priority."*

Provisions on crop-specific rules are watered down in some regards (2). The text also took up much needed and important new provisions, regarding the monitoring of pesticide residues and metabolites in the environment and in humans, the import and export of active substances and pesticides and access to justice (3).

*"On the other hand, the text doesn't tackle the [heavily flawed method to calculate pesticide reduction, the so-called Harmonised Risk Indicator 1](#)", says Natalija Svrtan. "This industry-friendly calculation method is misleading and gives a false impression of improvement when there is none!"(4).*

The reference period for calculating reductions was also changed from 2015-2017 to 2013-2017, hence lowering ambition. While the Commission proposed a total ban of pesticides in all sensitive areas, the voted text allows biocontrol products and products allowed in organic farming, as well as derogations for the use of other substances in sensitive areas. Also, certain areas were removed from the definition, such as areas designated "for the protection of habitats or species where the maintenance or improvement of the status of water is an important factor in their protection" (part of Annex IV of the Water Framework Directive). The text leaves it up to member states to indicate protected nature areas beyond Natura 2000 areas as sensitive areas (5).

*"The proposed 3 or 5 metres buffers around sensitive areas can't provide effective protection of citizens and biodiversity. This is clearly shown by data on pesticide drift. In a [recent IPSOS Poll](#), citizens again expressed extensive support for ambitious pesticide policies, such as much wider buffer zones", says Kristine De Schamphelaere (6).*

**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

PAN Europe considers that it is essential that the plenary vote (week of 20th of November) addresses the remaining important shortcomings of the current text. This would reflect science-based decision-making and prioritisation of the public interest, as expected by citizens. Civil society organisations have gathered important demands for an effective SUR [in a joint statement](#).

## Contact

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## Notes:

- (1) Shown in reports by [Corporate Europe Observatory](#) and [DeSmog](#)
- (2) The voted text in ENVI states that crop-specific rules should be taken up by member states for 5 of the most important crops contributing to pesticide use and risk, while at a later time the crop-specific rules should cover 60% of utilised agricultural area (UAA), excluding kitchen gardens and permanent grassland. The original Commission's proposal stated crop-specific rules should be implemented at 90% of UAA. The exclusion of permanent grassland is new in comparison to the Commission's proposal, and compensates partly for the decrease in UAA.
- (3) A new article on monitoring of pesticide residues and their metabolites in the environment ((ground)water, soil, air, dust precipitation, biota) and in humans has been taken up, to assess whether the findings comply with predicted exposure from environmental and human risk assessments according to Regulation 1107/2009. A new article on import and export, including the prohibition of production, storage, circulation in the EU and export to third countries of banned active substances and pesticides was also included in the adopted text.
- (4) The calculation method to measure progress towards reduction goals is still based on the Harmonised Risk Indicator 1. This calculation method is misleading ([briefing](#) and [video](#)), and hence would prevent reaching an effective 50% reduction in pesticide use and risk by 2030, a key goal of the European Green Deal.
- (5) The adopted text in ENVI states no pesticides can be used in sensitive areas, except for biocontrol products and products allowed in organic farming, and moreover allows derogations from these general rules. Regarding natural protected areas beyond Natura 2000 areas, the text leaves it to member states to indicate in the Nationally designated protected areas inventory (CDDA) which additional nationally protected areas would fall under sensitive areas. Certain areas have been excluded from the definition of sensitive areas, such as *urban areas covered by watercourse, areas designated for the protection of habitats or species where the maintenance or improvement of the status of water is an important factor in their protection (part of Annex IV of the Water Framework Directive) and Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs - GAEC 8 under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP))*. Urban areas covered by watercourses will be mostly included in sensitive areas through 'areas used by the general public'. In EFAs, pesticide use is also prohibited under the CAP. Exclusion of EFAs from the definition however means no buffers will be established around them.
- (6) The [recent poll](#) carried out by Ipsos in 6 EU Member States expressed extensive support of citizens for ambitious pesticide policies, with high agreement across the different member states. Among the respondents, 81,8% and 75,9% of respondents indicated concern about respectively the environmental impact and the health impact of pesticide use. Respondents also are supportive of binding provisions on IPM and the application of the precautionary principle.

Concerns of citizens are shared and have been repeatedly stressed by [scientists](#). A large majority of respondents were also in favour of large buffer zones: 41,8% of respondents chose for 1000 meters or 3000 meters buffer zones, while in total 78,8% respondents chose for a buffer of at least 50 meters or more. NGO's have been advocating for at least 50-150 meters. The 3 and 5 metres proposed by the EC and MEPs are far too narrow to provide effective protection to citizens and biodiversity, given the scientific evidence on much larger distances over which pesticides travel through air and dust. e.g.: [Linhart et al. 2019. Pesticide contamination and associated risk factors at public playgrounds near intensively managed apple and wine orchards](#), [Brühl et al. 2021. Direct pesticide exposure of insects in nature conservation areas in Germany](#).

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