

[Press Release]



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Europe-wide citizen science action shows pesticides are present in the hair of every third person tested

[Brussels, 19th October 2022] - [Results](#) of the Pesticide-CheckUp, a citizens' science action initiated by the civil society alliance Good Food Good Farming with the support of 10 national partner organisations, reveal that harmful pesticides frequently used in agriculture and public spaces can be detected in the hair of every third person.

Between May and August 2022, 300 people from across Europe sent in their hair samples to participate in the action. An independent laboratory analysed the samples for the presence of 30 different pesticides (17 herbicides, 11 fungicides and 2 insecticides) - a small fraction (6.6%) of the total of 455 pesticide active substances currently authorised in Europe. The substances tested for were selected based on their use frequency and potential toxicity for human health and the environment. Glyphosate was not included as it requires a different testing method.

The results of this Pesticide-CheckUp show that pesticide residues can be found in the hair of nearly every third person tested (29%; 87 of the 300 participants). Findings furthermore suggest that pesticide residues can be more frequently detected in the hair of farmers and agricultural workers (43,5%), illustrating that farm workers are the ones most exposed to pesticides. In relation to people's residence, the pesticides tested were more frequently found in the hair of people that live in rural areas (39.5%), followed by those who live in towns (25.9%) and in cities (21.8%).

The fungicide tebuconazole was found in 7,3% of the samples, and was the second most frequently detected pesticide tested. This substance is identified by the EU authorities as suspected of being toxic to reproduction and potential endocrine disruptor. It can also contribute to the development of liver cancer. It is on the EU list of 53 'candidates for substitution' (CfS) and one of PAN Europe's [Toxic 12 that should be banned immediately](#). Six other very toxic pesticides from the EU CfS list were detected in the hair. Other frequently found pesticides included prosulfocarb (herbicide, toxic to aquatic life with long lasting effects) and acetamiprid (neonicotinoid insecticide suspected of being neurotoxic).

The project emphasises the need for better EU pesticide regulations to protect farmers, citizens and the environment from the exposure to potentially harmful pesticides.

Angeliki Lyssimachou, Senior Science Policy Officer at the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), explains: *"Surveys like the Pesticide-CheckUp show that EU-wide measures to reduce exposure to toxic pesticides are urgently needed to safeguard the health of vulnerable groups, such as farmers and residents of agricultural areas. European governments and the Commission must put health first and move towards an agricultural model that does not depend on pesticides or other harmful chemicals."*

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Tjerk Dalhuisen from PAN Europe: *“Pesticides should not be in people's bodies and not in our hair. Especially not the most toxic ones that should have been banned long ago. One million Europeans demand a quick phase out of pesticides and to restore nature in the Save Bees and Farmers citizens initiative. Let's start moving towards a pesticide-free future today.”*

Madeleine Coste, Policy Officer at Slow Food Europe adds: *“The EU must seize the opportunity to set in motion a true transformation of our agri-food system by supporting a shift to agroecology. Across Europe, citizens are mobilising for Good Food and Good Farming and making clear that change is needed to provide food that is healthy for them, for the planet, and for those producing it.”*

[Pesticide-CheckUp Summary Report](#)

Public protest action “Detox EU agriculture!” for better pesticide policies

What: Colourful protest with music, speeches and concluding photo-action

When: Thursday, 27th October from 15:00 to 17:00

Where: Place du Luxembourg, 1050 Ixelles (in front of the EU parliament)

The event will be held in English with French translation and vice-versa.

More information available [here](#).

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