

“CITIZENS FOR SCIENCE IN PESTICIDE REGULATION”

EUROPEANS JOIN FORCES CALLING FOR A HIGHER LEVEL OF PROTECTION FROM PESTICIDES

European regulators are letting the citizens of the EU down by allowing the use of harmful pesticides in agriculture and public green areas based on an ‘unfit for purpose’ risk assessment regime that relies on pesticide industry generated toxicity studies and overlooks substitution of pesticides with non-chemical ecological alternatives.

The stated purpose of the European pesticide regulation, in force since 2009, is to ensure a high level of protection of human, animal and environmental health. Pesticide products and residues should not be authorised for standard use if they are found to have harmful effects on humans, animals, the environment, and its ecosystems.

Unfortunately, this is far from the reality, according to a new coalition, **Citizens for Science in Pesticide Regulation**.

“The current pesticide risk assessment procedure is failing us”, says Dr. Angeliki Lysimachou, Science Policy Officer of Pesticide Action Network Europe. “The rules are not respected. The whole process is driven by the pesticide industry, which is allowed to assess the safety of its own products, always behind closed doors, and even to design its own testing methodologies. As a result, many tons of harmful pesticides are used in Europe today, in increasing numbers, even when scientific evidence from public research shows they are not safe. This must come to an end.”

Major conflicts of interest exist in the pesticides regulatory system. The Monsanto Papers - internal Monsanto documents recently disclosed in cancer litigation in the USA - show how industry can actively subvert science. It is clear that industry must be kept at arm’s length from safety testing, risk assessment and risk management.

The pesticide industry does its own safety testing and is heavily involved in designing the methods for risk assessment. Expert panels of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) continue to include people with financial ties to the agrochemical industry.

Scientific evidence indicates that humans and the environment are not being sufficiently protected from these harmful chemicals. Studies reveal an abnormally high rate of diseases in farming families and residents in agricultural areas¹, high levels of pesticide residues detected in food² and the environment^{3,4}, and the decline of biodiversity and wildlife in proximity to agricultural areas^{5,6}.

Dr Apolline Rogers, lawyer from the ClientEarth adds *“EU pesticides law already requires these substances to have no harmful effects on humans and animal health– but evidence from the fields prove that it is not respected. The authorities in charge need to remember their obligations under EU law. They must change the way they assess and authorise pesticides to make sure that people and environment are effectively protected.”*

COALITION MANIFESTO LAUNCHED

The European Commission is currently reviewing pesticides legislation as part of its REFIT programme, the European Parliament has published a series of reports and has set up the PEST Committee to investigate the European Union's authorisation procedure for pesticides, and the Commission has presented a proposal to increase transparency in European food law.

At this crucial time, the EU and national civil society organisations Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Europe, ClientEarth, Corporate Europe Observatory, Health and Environmental Alliance (HEAL), Global 2000 (Austria), Generations Futures (France) and Justice Pesticides (France), launch our coalition manifesto in Brussels today, for “rigorous science, safe food, and a healthy environment”, signed by more than 100 civil society organisations and institutions, as well as 25 individual experts.

“The current model of pesticide risk assessment is not working and must be reformed if people and the environment are to be protected from the harm caused by these chemicals.”

This is the message of the new European coalition “**Citizens for Science in Pesticide Regulation**”.

The manifesto calls upon European regulators to urgently reform the current pesticide risk assessment and risk management system, and suggests practical solutions to the major failings in the system. These fall under three sections and can be summarised as follows:

- A. **Prioritise public health, the environment and sustainable agriculture** - pesticides must be used only as a last resort when all other non-chemical alternatives have been applied and failed.
- B. **Ensure that decision makers rely on data that is complete, public, up to date and free from industrial bias** – safety testing must not be carried out by the pesticide industry itself and data requirements for pesticides should be updated according to the most recent scientific findings to address human developmental diseases and impact on ecosystems.
- C. **Enable decision makers, civil society and the scientific community to scrutinise the integrity and effectiveness of European pesticide policy** - results and data of all pesticide safety tests shall be published on the internet in a consistent and searchable format.

The coalition is calling upon regulators to incorporate its demands in their decisions, phase out the use of harmful chemicals in agriculture and management of green areas and fulfil the high level of protection that the EU law requires.

¹ Bellanger et al (2015). Neurobehavioral Deficits, Diseases, and Associated Costs of Exposure to Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals in the European Union. <https://academic.oup.com/jcem/article/100/4/1256/2815066>

² PAN Europe (2017). How many pesticides did you eat today? Plenty, according to European Food Safety Authority. April 13. <https://www.pan-europe.info/press-releases/2017/04/how-many-pesticides-did-you-eat-today-plenty-according-european-food-safety>

³ Stehle S, Schulz R (2015). Pesticide authorization in the EU — environment unprotected? Environmental Science and Pollution Research 22(24):19632–19647. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11356-015-5148-5>

⁴ Stehle S (2015). EU – European Union or Environment Unprotected? The EcoTox Blog. Sept 21. <http://www.master-ecotoxicology.de/ecotox-blog/eu-european-union-or-environment-unprotected/>

⁵ Hallmann CA et al (2017). More than 75 percent decline over 27 years in total flying insect biomass in protected areas. PLOS ONE 12(10): e0185809.

⁶ Woodcock BA et al (2015). Impacts of neonicotinoid use on long-term population changes in wild bees in England. Nature Communications 7:12459. DOI:10.1038/ncomms12459.