

February 23, 2024

Joint Statement

The EU must make pesticide reduction a reality

We, the undersigned 125 organisations, condemn the failure of the European Parliament, Council and Commission to deliver on a crucial element of the Green Deal: pesticide reduction. On February 6th 2024 the European Commission announced it would withdraw its proposal for the Sustainable Use Regulation (SUR), delaying by years urgently needed action to reduce the use and risks of synthetic pesticides in Europe.

By failing to adopt an ambitious pesticide reduction law, the EU institutions betray more than a million citizens across Europe who expressed the pressing need to reduce pesticides, and to support farmers in doing so, through the ECI Save Bees and Farmers¹. Their demands deserve an answer, the next generations as well. Instead, what citizens have received is increased health and environmental risks and no commitment to sustainability, thus undermining the credibility of EU institutions.

The Commission decision to withdraw the SUR should not be presented as a 'gift' to farmers. It will only keep them trapped into the pesticide merry-go-round, further locking farming in unsustainable practices that impact farmers' health, that of workers and citizens. Right from the outset, it was the pesticide and wider agribusiness industry - corporations that make big profits on the backs of farmers – who launched attacks on the Green Deal, Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategy².

The farmers' mobilisations taking place across Europe require answers that address the root causes of their low income and lack of prospects. Backtracking on environmental ambition is not the solution. On the contrary: if the climate and biodiversity crisis are not addressed, the challenges faced by farmers will only worsen.

For decades, scientists have warned about the detrimental impact of pesticides. There is increasing scientific evidence linking exposure to synthetic pesticides to severe illnesses like cancer and Parkinson's disease, with farmers and farm workers being the first affected³. Last year, over 6000 scientists raised the alarm on the impact of pesticides on biodiversity and the crucial need of a strong regulation to drastically reduce the use of pesticides to ensure our long-term food security⁴.

Producing food with less, if any, pesticides is possible, necessary and desirable for all in society. Extensive research and empirical data across Europe demonstrate the potential of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and agroecological practices to reduce reliance on pesticide, while increasing the overall resilience of agricultural systems and reinforcing the financial sustainability of farms⁵. Although IPM has been mandatory since 2014,

¹ <https://www.savebeesandfarmers.eu/eng>

² [Corporate Europe Observatory](#), 2023, How the pesticide lobby is sabotaging the EU pesticide reduction law

³ [Inserm](#), 2021, Latest Collective Expert Review on the Health Effects of Pesticides

⁴ [Rani et al.](#), 2021, An extensive review on the consequences of chemical pesticides on human health and environment

⁵ [Pe'er, Guy et al.](#), July 2023: Scientists support the EU's Green Deal and reject the unjustified argumentation against the Sustainable Use Regulation and the Nature Restoration Law

⁵ <https://ipmworks.net/>

[Kerr, Rachel Bezner, et al.](#), 2021 Can agroecology improve food security and nutrition? A review

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implementation has been lacking, due to the absence of a robust, binding and supportive framework. The SUR proposal aimed to tackle these shortcomings.

Instead of embracing profit-guided tools promoted by the agroindustry, like pesticides and genetically modified organisms, EU policies must focus on supporting farmers in shifting towards environmentally and socially sustainable agricultural models, such as organic and agroecological farming. The push for the deregulation of GMOs will only perpetuate an agricultural model that depends on synthetic pesticides and contribute to the heightened dependence of farmers on large corporations⁶ via patented seeds. In contrast, it is crucial for the EU to acknowledge, protect, and universally promote farmers' traditional knowledge and know-how, and implement non-chemical alternatives to synthetic pesticides.

Supporting farmers in the transition also means tackling the decades of policies that have led to this situation, with farmers being pushed to produce ever-more, ever-cheaper food. This has amounted to large profit margins for agribusiness but at great societal costs⁷. The EU must ensure fair prices and a decent standard of living for farmers and farm workers, and protect their livelihoods. The reduction in pesticide use must also be accompanied by strong trade regulations that prevent unfair competition from products that do not respect EU rules. It is also high time for the EU to ban the production and exportation of pesticides which cannot legally be used on EU land.

We call on the European Commission to keep the focus on the real issues faced by farmers, including fair incomes, while accelerating the transition towards resilient food systems not dependent on synthetic pesticides, and ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all. An ambitious regulation at the European level for reducing pesticide use, aligned with the Farm to Fork objectives and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity targets, is urgently needed to make this transition possible, and must remain a priority of the next EU mandate.

Signatories:

EU and International Organisations

Agroecology Europe	European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT)
BeeLife	Fair Trade Advocacy Office
Birdlife	Foodwatch International
Child Rights International Network (CRIN)	Friends of the Earth Europe
Corporate Europe Observatory	IFOAM Organics Europe
Euro Coop	Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)
European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)	Justice Pesticides

[CNRS](#), June 2021, Organic farming could feed Europe by 2050

⁶ [Foodwatch](#), 2023, New Genome Techniques (NGT) – A Risky Corporate Distraction From Real Sustainable Solutions

⁷ [Le Basic](#), 2021, Pesticides: A model that's costing us dearly

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PAN Europe

SAFE Food Advocacy Europe

Slow Food International

Urgenci International Community Supported
Agriculture Network

Women Engage for a Common Future
(WECF)

National Organisations

Abeille Arlésienne

Abeille dauphinoise syndicat d'apiculture de
l'Isere

Abeille Savoyarde Annecienne

ADA AURA

AEGILOPS

AGROLINK Association

Amigos de la Tierra

Amis de la Terre France

Asociación Galega de Apicultura-AGA

Association biodynamique Limousin

Association for Protection of Nature and
Environment Nagykovácsi

Aurelia Foundation

BioForum

Broederlijk Delen

Bündnis für eine enkeltaugliche Landwirtschaft
e.V.

Cambiamo Agricoltura Coalition

Canopea

CARI asbl

Carolina

CEEweb for Biodiversity

Centre d'Etude Technique Apicole de Loire
Atlantique

Civilek a Mecsekéért Mozgalom

CNCD-11.11.11

Coalition Living Earth (Koalicja Żywa Ziemia)

Coalición Por Otra PAC

Commun de Treilles

Coordination gegen BAYER-Gefahren

Dutch Bee Conservation

Ecologistas en Acción

Éghajlatvédelmi Szövetség - Hungarian
Climate Alliance

Entraide et Fraternité

Fair Trade Advocacy Office

Fédération des Syndicats d'Apiculture du Bas
Rhin

Fédération Française des Apiculteurs
Professionnels

Federation Nationale des Organisations
Sanitaires Apicoles Départementales
FNOSAD

Federazione Nazionale Pro Natura

Felelős Gasztrohós Alapítvány

Fenntarthatóság Felé Egyesület

Fondation pour la Nature et l'Homme

Friends of the Earth Malta

Friends of the Earth Sweden / Jordens Vänner

Générations Futures

GEOTA - Grupo de Estudos de Ordenamento
do Território e Ambiente

GLOBAL 2000 - Friends of the Earth Austria

Green Circle of Pecs

Green Transition Denmark

Hnutí DUHA - Friends of the Earth Czech
Republic

Hogar sin Tóxicos

Humanité et Biodiversité

Hungarian Society for Environmental
Education (HSEE)

Iles de Paix

International Society of Doctors for
Environment (ISDE)

Internationale Arbeitsgemeinschaft der
Wasserwerke (IAWR)

Jane Goodall Institute Hungary

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Kétker Közösségi Alapítvány	Syndicat Apicole Dauphinois
L'abeille Normande Du Calvados	Syndicat Apicole de la Côte d'Or
Les apiculteurs de la Region Est	Syndicat Apicole des Alpes de Haute Provence
Lipu BirdLife Italia	Syndicat Apicole l'Abeille Bretonne 22
Magyar Természetvédők Szövetsége	Syndicat Apicole Le miel des Vosges
Mensa Cívica	Syndicat Apiculture Haute Savoie
Meten=Weten	Syndicat d'Apiculture du Gard
Natagora	Syndicat d'Apiculture du Rhône
Nature & Progrès	Syndicat de l'Apiculture de l'Allier
Naturschutzbund Deutschland e. V. (NABU)	Terre d'Abeilles
Natuur & Milieu	The Environmental Forum
Natuurpunt VZW	Umanotera
Nettle Environmental and Nature Conservation Association	Umweltinstitut München e.V.
Občianska iniciatíva Slovensko bez GMO	Union Nationale de l'Apiculture Française (UNAF)
OGM dangers	Union syndicale apicole du Roussillon (USAR)
OZ Vidiecky parlament	Védegylet Egyesület / Protect the Future Association
Permakultura SK	Verebélyi Mária
Pesticide Action Network Netherlands	Via Pontica Foundation
Pestizid Aktions-Netzwerk e.V. (PAN Germany)	Voedsel Anders Vlaanderen
Pomona vzw	Vogelbescherming Nederland / BirdLife The Netherlands
Quercus ANCN	vzw Climaxi
Reflex Környezetvédő Egyesület/Reflex Environmental Association	Weiner Sennyey Tibor
ROMAPIS The Federation of the Romanian Beekeepers Associations	ZERO - associação sistema terrestre sustentável
Save Our Seeds	Zöld Akció Egyesület (Green Action)
Schweisfurth Stiftung	
Škola permakultúry o.z.	
Slow Food Deutschland	
Solidagro	