

JOINT STATEMENT of Members of the European Parliament on

EU's double standard approach to hazardous pesticides

Brussels, November 11, 2020

We, the undersigned Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) call on the European Commission to **prohibit the export of pesticides that have been banned in the EU** due to their adverse health and environmental effects, and to **stop importing foodstuff produced outside the EU using these dangerous chemicals**.

The EU has some of the toughest pesticide laws in the world and has already banned or severely restricted the use of many pesticides found to cause serious damage to human health or the environment. However, companies remain free to export these hazardous products for use in non-EU countries. The EU also allows the import of agricultural products made with pesticides that are banned in Europe.

Exports of pesticides too dangerous for use in the EU

In 2018, EU countries approved the export of more than 81,000 tonnes of pesticide products containing chemicals prohibited for use in their own fields, as shown [in recent research](#). No less than 41 chemicals, considered too dangerous for use in the EU, were notified for export in the same year. Most shipments went to poorer countries like South Africa, Ukraine and Brazil. Experts warn that hazardous pesticides pose even greater risks in these countries because conditions of use (e.g. protective gear, aerial spraying) are not as strict as in the EU.

We are deeply concerned that large volumes of extremely toxic pesticides are exported to countries that do not have the capacities to control their risks and where their use results in widespread infringements of human rights and severe damages to the environment. UN human rights monitoring mechanisms recently reported violations and abuses of human rights in many of the countries to which pesticides are exported from the EU. For example, in Brazil, the [UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and hazardous substances and wastes](#) found "grave violations of human rights" associated with the use of pesticides. He warned that the country was on a "steep path of regression" and heading towards "an increasingly toxic future".

Import of food made with banned pesticides

The biggest importers of EU-banned pesticides happen to be those countries from which the EU sources most of its agricultural imports. Like a deadly boomerang, these pesticides can find their way back to the EU and onto the plates of European consumers whose health is meant to be protected by EU pesticide laws.

Member States' official food residue monitoring programme shows that in 2018, 74 different pesticides that are banned from use in the EU were detected in food sold in the EU market. 22 of those were also notified for export that year. The foods most often found to contain the most residues of banned pesticides came from China, India, Thailand, Brazil, Vietnam and Morocco.

While residues of banned pesticides are in principle not accepted in EU food, the MRLs for banned pesticides are not necessarily deleted. For example, MRLs for mutagenic carbendazim have not been deleted, and MRLs for chlorfenapyr or omethoate for certain products remain. Moreover, the MRL Regulation [does not impede countries to request an import tolerance](#) even for banned pesticides.

This is the case for propargite, for which an import tolerance was requested after the pesticide was banned in Europe.

We express our concerns that the import of foods treated with pesticides banned in the EU may be putting the health of consumers at risk, represents an unfair competition for European farmers, and negatively affects the populations and the environment of the countries where the foods are produced.

Political solutions

In May this year, the European Union launched its [Farm to Fork strategy](#), which outlines a commitment to [promote a global transition](#) to sustainable food systems “not only within its borders, but also outside”. In light of this objective, the EU can no longer turn a blind eye to the export of pesticides considered too dangerous for use inside our borders.

Therefore, we take note of the Commission’s promise under the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability, which was published in October, to “ensure that hazardous chemicals banned in the European Union are not produced for export”. This commitment must encompass hazardous pesticides.

In order to protect public health and the environment, and to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal, we call on the European Commission to prohibit the export of pesticides banned from use in the EU, as exemplified in the [recent decision of France](#) and as demanded by three dozen UN human rights experts in [a joint statement](#) released in July. What is too dangerous for use in the EU is also too dangerous for use in other countries.

We welcome the European Commission’s commitment to review import tolerances for substances meeting the cut-off criteria and strengthen the environmental dimension of the Maximum Residues Limit (MRL) legislation. We stress, however, that the Commission’s zero-tolerance approach should apply to residues of all pesticides that have been banned in the EU owing to their adverse health or environmental effects.

We also welcome the commitment that the EU will use “all its diplomacy, trade policy and development support instruments to promote the phasing out, as far as possible, of the use of pesticides no longer approved in the EU and to promote low-risk substances and alternatives to pesticides globally”. We demand that the EU works towards a comprehensive, binding international treaty to regulate hazardous pesticides throughout their life cycle, taking into account human rights principles, as [recommended by UN experts](#).

Signed and endorsed by the following Members of the European Parliament:

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