

**Mr. Christophe Hansen**

Commissioner for Food and Agriculture  
European Commission  
1049 Brussels (Belgium)

**Subject:** Pesticide reduction should be a key aspect from the upcoming Vision for Agriculture and Food, and is key to implement the recommendations of the Strategic Dialogue on EU Agriculture

Dear Commissioner Hansen,

We are writing to you regarding the upcoming EU Vision for Agriculture and Food. We would like to underline the important need of ambitious action on pesticide reduction, which should evidently have a central place in the EU Vision for Agriculture and Food. Therefore, we kindly provide you, in addition to this letter, with a briefing with our recommendations for the Vision.

The outcome of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture (SDA), endorsed by the involved stakeholders, provides recommendations for the future of EU agriculture. President von der Leyen committed to incorporate the recommendations of the SDA in the Vision for Agriculture and Food. The SDA report explicitly underlines the need to reduce pesticides, and recognises climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss as the most imposing challenges of planetary scale. The recommendations emphasize the need for urgent action to transition to sustainable farming practices and food systems. The SDA report emphasizes the importance of enforcement of existing legislation, which requires farmers to have a clear overview of all EU and national environmental and other relevant legislation applicable to their farms. These obligations, finds the report, should be translated to clear and actionable on-farm obligations, and dedicated training and independent advisory systems need to be made largely available. In our briefing hereby attached, we highlight key recommendations of the SDA linked to pesticides, and provide our recommendations for their effective policy implementation.

Ambitious action on pesticide reduction is urgent:

- Scientists stress the urgent need to reduce pesticides.<sup>1</sup> They highlight that evidence shows that restoring nature and reducing the use of agrochemicals are essential for maintaining long-term production capacity and enhancing food security, and are an investment with a high return rate and multiple beneficiaries across society. Pesticide use is a major cause of the extremely worrying collapse of biodiversity and pollution of soil and water resources. It undermines and kills a wide variety of organisms, and erodes ecosystem services, climate change resilience, food security and a long-term perspective for farmers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **6000 scientists in support of the SUR and NRL, Expression of Concern by Scientific associations: Rollback of EU environmental legislation and policies jeopardises the future of EU citizens (V2), We need a food system transformation – in the face of the Ukraine war, now more than ever, Scientists call for ambitious Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation**

<sup>2</sup> **Our global food system is the primary driver of biodiversity loss, European climate risk assessment, EEA, 2024, More than 75 percent decrease in total flying insect biomass over 27 years, Direct pesticide exposure of insects in nature conservation areas in Germany, Farmland practices are driving bird population decline across Europe, How pesticides impact human health and ecosystems in Europe, Pesticides and Soil Invertebrates: A Hazard Assessment, Pesticide effects on soil fauna communities-A meta-analysis, Scientists support the EU's Green**

- Pesticide reduction is supported by a very strong societal demand.<sup>3</sup> Through Eurobarometers, consultations (e.g. the Conference for the Future of Europe) and two European Citizens' initiatives (ECIs 'Save Bees and Farmers' and 'Stop Glyphosate'), Europeans expressed they are highly concerned about the dangerous impact of pesticides, and ask for protective policies and ambitious pesticide reductions. Although the ECI is one of the main democratic tools for EU citizens to express their demands, the calls of more than a million citizens are still in need of ambitious answers. It is essential that these demands of citizens are represented in the EU Vision for Agriculture and Food.
- Despite the fact that ambitious pesticide reductions is a key objective of the Green Deal, and the loud calls from citizens and scientists, sales of pesticides in the EU have not been decreasing, they remained relatively constant since 2011, and are even increasing for the more toxic pesticides in a series of Member States.
- While the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive 2000/128/EC includes provisions to protect citizens and the environment, reduce pesticides and implement Integrated Pest Management (IPM) principles, implementation is largely absent. The lack of implementation was underlined in multiple analyses by several EU institutions<sup>4</sup>. Ensuring full implementation and enforcement of the SUD, including effective application of the mandatory IPM principles, leading to ambitious pesticide reduction, should be a key priority in the Vision future of EU agriculture. Many farmers across Europe are successfully leading the way in implementing IPM and reducing pesticides, while maintaining yield and improving profitability. The right supportive framework is needed to ensure full implementation, including access to independent advisory systems equipped to provide high-expertise independent advice on IPM. The current Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is in need of urgent and thorough reform. Harmful subsidies which undermine environmental objectives should be halted immediately. Public money should only be invested to support practices with clear societal benefits.

The coming years are of crucial importance to establish a plan to reconcile farmers, citizens and the environment, with proper transition of EU's agriculture towards a truly sustainable pillar of the EU's society and economy. The Vision for Agriculture and Food should lay out the urgent actions needed to ensure a transition to food systems which protect ecosystems and their functions, citizens' health, a long-term perspective for farmers and thriving, lively and healthy rural areas.

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**Deal and reject the unjustified argumentation against the Sustainable Use Regulation and the Nature Restoration Law, Europe's state of water 2024, EEA, 2024.**

<sup>3</sup> Of the 10 successful ECI's that have been submitted to the European Commission, 2 focused on pesticides. Through the ECI 'Save Bees and Farmers', citizens asked for ambitious pesticide reductions to protect health, environment, biodiversity, long-term food security and long-term perspective for farmers. More than 1 million citizens asked the European Commission and the Member States for a ban on glyphosate and ambitious pesticide reductions, through a successful ECI for a ban on glyphosate (2017), IPSOS Citizens Poll on Pesticides (2023), The final report of the Conference for the Future of Europe included the need for high environmental ambition in food production systems, and to drastically reduce pesticide use (2022), The Eurobarometer survey on Food safety in the EU listed pesticide residues in food as the most frequently selected concern related to food safety (2022), EU public consultation on the Common Agricultural Policy: respondents showed a concern for environmental challenges, such as the prevention of biodiversity loss and prevention and reduction of water pollution (pesticides, fertilisers) (2017)

<sup>4</sup> Implementation assessment on SUD by the European Parliamentary Research Service (2018)

Report on the SUD of the European Commission (2020)

Report on the SUD of the European Court of Auditors (2020)

We would like to request a meeting with you, as we would greatly appreciate the opportunity to further exchange on these recommendations.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration,

Yours sincerely,

Martin Dermine, Executive Director, PAN Europe

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Dermine", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.