

Pesticide Votes in Infographics

EU Parliament & Pesticides: who supported citizens, nature and a long-term perspective for farmers?

The high use of pesticides is a major problem in our current food system, causing harm to and failing farmers, consumers, and future generations.

Recently, the EU introduced a [new plan on pesticides – the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation \(SUR\)](#) – to cut pesticide use and risk by half in the EU and protect people and nature.

However, this proposal was severely watered down and ultimately failed to pass in the European Parliament. This means a failure to respond to the [demand by over 1 million citizens](#) for the EU to drastically reduce pesticide use and to support farmers in this transition.

Ahead of the EU elections, PAN Europe, Friends of the Earth Europe, and Corporate Europe Observatory today present a set of voting score cards by political group on the pesticide reduction proposal. These scorecards show which share of political groups supported a strong law, and which ones contributed to the ultimate abandonment of it.

We chose six amendments on a variety of key aspects of the law, for which voting results per MEP were available. Score cards have also been produced for specific EU member states, showing voting results by national party: in [Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland and Spain](#).

These are the results:

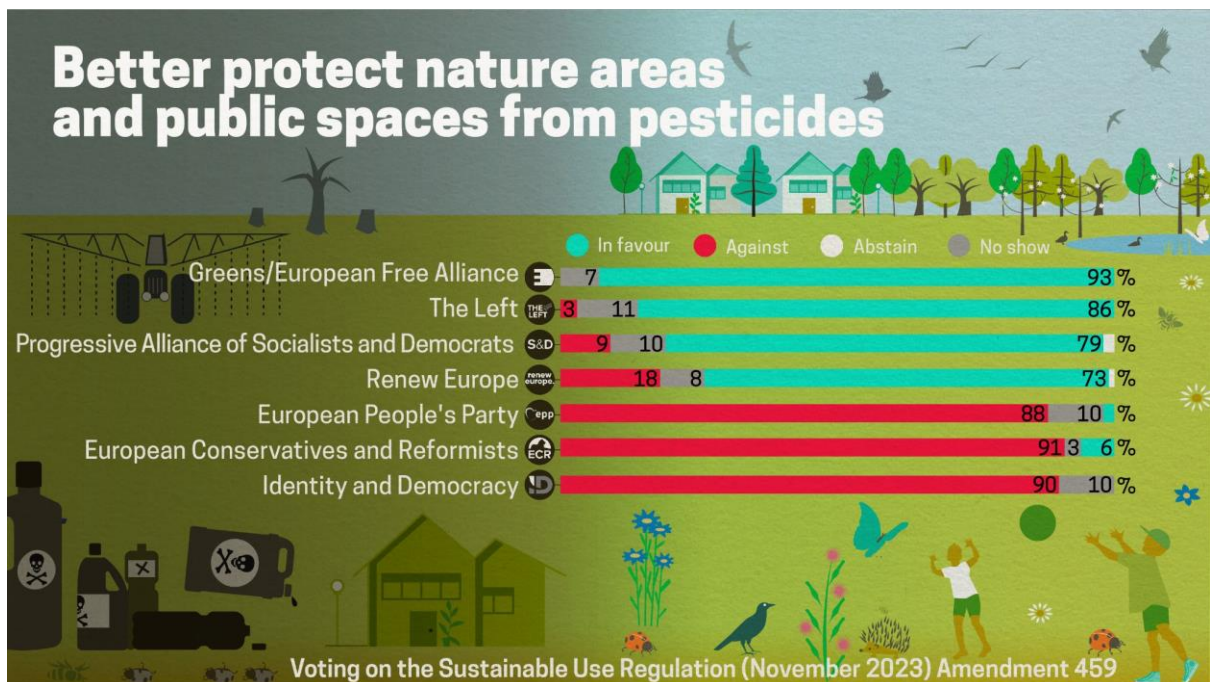
Using pesticides as a last resort

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a set of tools designed to reduce the use of pesticides by placing preventative agronomic measures at the heart of pest control, with pesticides used only as a very last resort. Although IPM is already mandatory through the current Directive (the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive) it has not been properly implemented by Member States. The new pesticide regulation aimed to further define and concretize crop-specific IPM rules, ensuring IPM is effectively applied. The following graph shows which percentage of the political groups supported - or not - these mandatory rules.



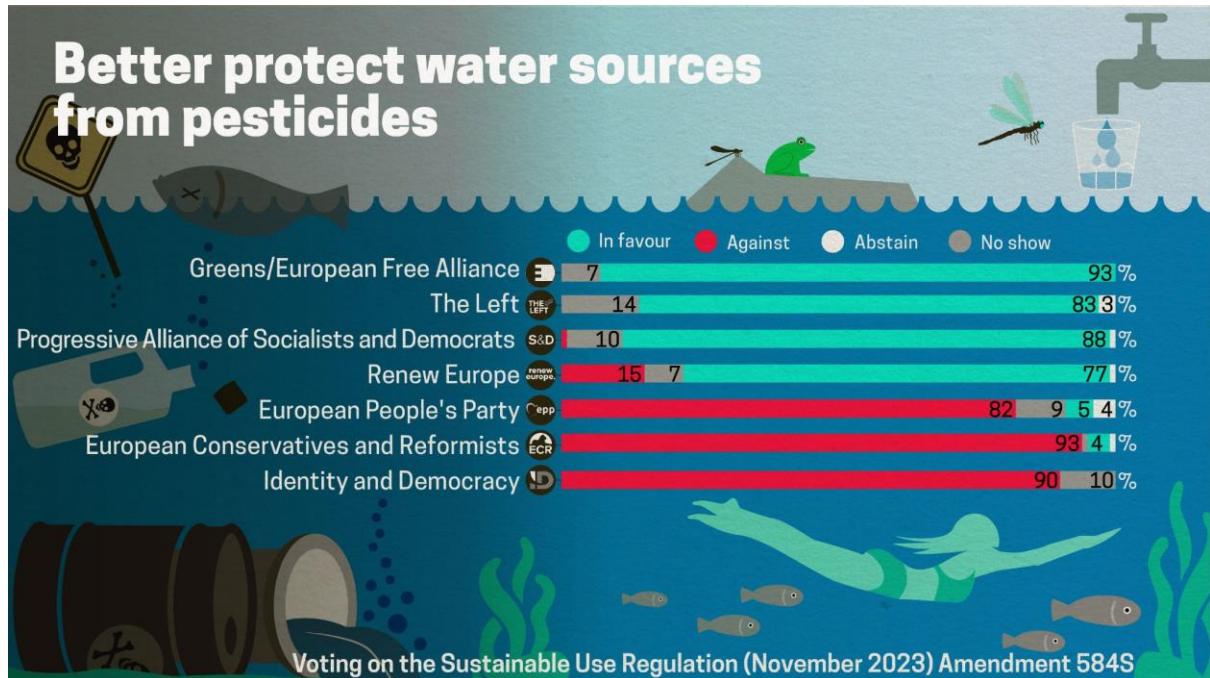
Protecting nature areas and public spaces

The proposed new law would ban the use of pesticides in sensitive areas such as nature protected areas, public areas, parks and playgrounds. This measure aimed to better protect citizens, especially vulnerable groups, and our ecosystems. The following graph illustrates which percentage of the political groups supported this essential protection.



Protecting water sources

Pesticide pollution in water poses severe risks to public health and ecosystems, and incurs significant costs for society. The graph below shows which percentage of political groups voted in favor of measures to better protect water sources from pesticide contamination.



Making supermarkets also responsible for pesticides reduction

The responsibility of reducing pesticide use should be shared across the food supply chain, such as the food industry and supermarkets - certainly not on farmers alone. The following graph illustrates which percentage of political groups supported holding wholesalers, food producers and supermarkets also accountable for reducing pesticide use.

Make supermarkets also responsible for the reduction of pesticides



Voting on the Sustainable Use Regulation (November 2023) Amendment 455

Providing yearly independent advice for farmers

In the last decades, publicly funded advisory systems for farmers have largely been replaced by private services linked to pesticide corporations, raising concerns about conflicts of interest. Regular independent advice is crucial to help break free from the pesticide industry's grip and support farmers in adopting alternative practices. The following graph shows which percentages of MEPs were in support of farmers receiving at least once a year independent advice, instead of every three years.

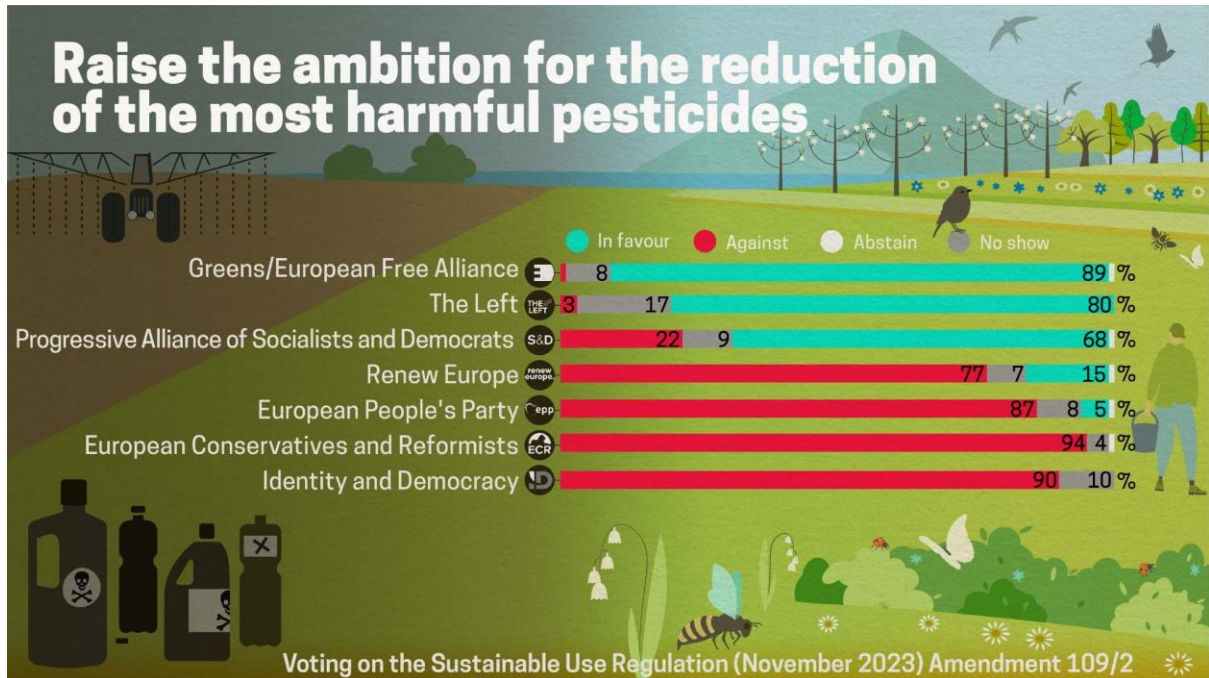
Provide yearly independent advice to farmers for pesticide reduction



Voting on the Sustainable Use Regulation (November 2023) Amendment 600 and others

Raising the ambition for the reduction of the most harmful pesticides

The graph below shows which MEPs voted against an amendment to set a higher reduction target for the most harmful pesticides, to 65% by 2030 instead of 50%. For these highly toxic pesticides, a 50% reduction is far from ambitious enough to protect citizens, farmers and nature, and a full phase out is necessary.



Conclusion:

On all topics, the large majority or all of the christian-democratic EPP group, the conservative (to far-right) ECR and the far-right ID group voted consistently against the interests of people. These groups do not even support farmers getting regular independent advice on pesticides, or a higher reduction of the most harmful ones! Undermining urgently needed measures to reduce pesticide use harms the well-being of citizens, the health of our ecosystems and a long term perspective for farmers. As citizens across Europe head to the EU elections polls for, voters should be aware of how political groups (mis)represented their interests when given the opportunity.

Voters from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland and Spain also have the possibility [to check out how MEPs from their national parties voted](#).

Voters from all EU countries can also check how individual MEPs voted in an [overview table](#).

Now is the time to make your vote count, and to ensure that Members of the European Parliament elected in June truly represent the public interest.

Methodology:

The data for the graphs has been collected through [the results of the roll-call votes](#) of the plenary vote of the European Parliament on the SUR proposal, which took place on 22 November in Strasbourg. The results were also verified through [MEP watch](#).

ANNEX

We describe here in more details the 6 amendments, or set of amendments, which have been used in the analysis.

1. Topic: Using pesticides as a last resort

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) places preventative agronomic measures (e.g. increasing beneficial insects such as natural enemies, crop rotation, strip cropping, improving soil health, choosing robust varieties, ...) at the center of pest management. IPM has already been mandatory since 2014, under the current European Directive on Sustainable Use of Pesticides (SUD).

However, implementation has been lacking in member states, which has been acknowledged and concluded by different EU bodies. The proposal for a Regulation on Pesticide Use (SUR) exactly aimed at tackling the lack of implementation of IPM, by implementing more concrete IPM rules. Past years have shown that, without a very clear framework of concrete rules, IPM is mostly not, or not adequately, implemented. Ambitious pesticide reductions have therefore not occurred. Provisions on '*crop-specific rules*' in the SUR proposal of the Commission, which aimed at concretising and clarifying IPM implementation for different crops and regions, were therefore key to ensure effective IPM implementation.

The [amendments 463, 470-472, 474, 525, 533-535, 540-541, 544, 548-549, 552-556, 619](#), tabled on behalf of the EPP group, included changing *binding 'crop-specific rules'* to '*crop-specific guidelines*'. Deleting mandatory, clear rules fundamentally weakened the proposal, and its capacity to effectively implement IPM.

Establishing merely voluntary 'guidelines' would prevent the SUR from effectively addressing the shortcomings of the current SUD.

MEPs who rejected the above mentioned amendments, hence supported an effective implementation of IPM, to ensure moving to resilient, pesticide-

independent cropping systems. MEPs who supported the amendments, aimed at depriving the proposal from having real impact.

2. Topic: Protecting nature areas and public spaces

The SUR proposal comprised essential provisions to better protect public areas and nature areas. Different amendments were tabled to fundamentally weaken or delete these provisions, leaving their protection up to member states. The latter would mean in practice that citizens and nature in many member states would not receive better protection from exposure to pesticides. This while the major role of pesticides in the collapse of biodiversity, and the many links between pesticide exposure and human health impacts, urgently require effective protection of citizens and biodiversity.

[Amendment 459](#) aimed at deleting the provisions of the SUR proposal which defined which type of areas minimally need protection, and how they should be protected. The amendment left the appointing of sensitive areas up to member states, while also drastically narrowing the type of sensitive areas that should be protected.

- The amendment excluded Natura 2000 areas and other nature areas from sensitive areas.
- The amendment stated that professional sport facilities and railway networks would not be considered a sensitive area.
- The amendment also limited public areas to public areas "*where access cannot be fully restricted during the application of plant protection products, ...*". This would mean that pesticides could still be used in public areas, for locations/situations where citizens could be prevented access *during* spraying. Evidently, this would lead to no real protection of public areas and citizens, as pesticides drift over far distances, and persist in the environment for a long time.

MEPs who rejected the above mentioned amendment, hence supported a better protection of nature areas and public spaces. MEPs who supported the amendments, aimed at boycotting effective protection of citizens and nature.

3. Topic: Protecting water sources

The SUR proposal included an important article to better protect the aquatic environment and drinking water. Given the far-reaching impact of pesticide pollution on aquatic ecosystems and drinking water, the water scarcity the EU is facing, to be further exacerbated by climate change, and the extensive societal costs of water pollution, these provisions were essential.

[Amendment 548](#), tabled on behalf of the EPP group, deleted this article (article 19).

MEPs who rejected the above mentioned amendment, hence supported a better protection of water sources. MEPs who supported the amendments, aimed at boycotting effective protection of our aquatic ecosystems and drinking water.

4. Topic: Making supermarkets also responsible for pesticides reduction

It is essential that the whole food chain is engaged in the implementation of integrated pest management (IPM), for example through establishing long-term purchasing contracts between farmers and retailers.

[Amendment 455](#), tabled on behalf of The Left Group, defined responsibilities for the major retailers, food producers and wholesalers.

MEPs who supported the above mentioned amendment, hence supported a shared responsibility along the value chain to ensure the effective implementation of IPM, and reduce pesticide use.

5. Topic: Providing yearly independent advice for farmers

The SUR proposal included provisions to provide yearly independent advice for farmers. To implement IPM, support in the form of regular independent advice is key.

[Amendment 600](#), tabled on behalf of the EPP, aimed at providing farmers merely *every three years* with independent advice, instead of *at least once a year*. Receiving advice only every three years is largely insufficient to provide farmers with effective support in implementing IPM and reducing pesticides.

MEPs who rejected the above mentioned amendment, hence supported that farmers receive independent advice at least yearly.

6. Topic: Raising the ambition for the reduction of the most harmful pesticides

The SUR proposal included provisions to reduce the use and risk of chemical pesticides and the use of more hazardous pesticides (the most harmful pesticides) with 50% by 2030. The amendments tabled in the European Parliament overall weakened the reduction targets, by setting an earlier reference period (2013-2017 instead of 2015-2017), which was the most ambitious compromise found.

However, [amendment 109](#), tabled by the ENVI Committee, aimed to then at least increase the reduction target for more hazardous pesticides to 65% instead of 50%. More hazardous pesticides should be phased out as soon as possible, so it was essential that MEPs support this amendment.

MEPs who supported the amendment, hence supported to raise the ambition for the reduction of the most harmful pesticides.

Credits for the visuals:

Visuals by [Marmelade](#)