




# Citizens' Demands for Pesticide Reduction in Europe

Citizens across Europe are alarmed by the dangers to their health, the destruction of wildlife and nature, the decline of pollinators like bees, the contamination of food, soil and water due to harmful chemicals. The broad demand for pesticide reduction is shown in EU panels, barometers, opinion polls and official citizens initiatives.



**T**he pressure to reduce the use and risks of pesticides reflects broader societal concerns about the future of agriculture in Europe. It is backed by mounting scientific evidence showing the negative impacts of pesticides on environment, biodiversity and public health. For both farmers and citizens, the heavy dependence on dangerous chemicals is not sustainable, and undermines long-term food production.

Given the strong support for pesticide reduction, decision-makers can serve their voters by paying close attention to these calls for change as they shape the future of the EU's food system. Both family farms and the general public are served by a shift to sustainable and resilient farming.



## Conference on the Future of Europe

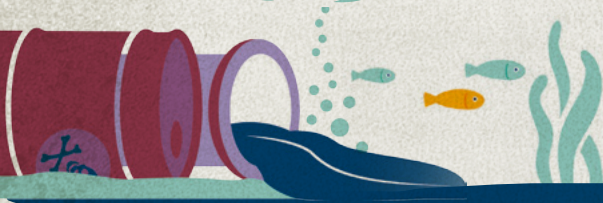
The Conference on the Future of Europe, launched in 2021, was an initiative aimed at engaging EU citizens in shaping the future of the European Union. Among the various topics discussed, environmental sustainability and particularly pesticide reduction, were significant areas of concern. Participating citizens sent a clear message to the institutions:

**Stricter pesticide regulations:** Citizens demanded significant reduction in pesticide use, emphasising the need to safeguard public health and the environment, and support farmers in their transitions toward sustainable and resilient farming systems.

**Promotion of organic farming:** There was strong support for policies that encourage organic farming and the reduction of chemical inputs in agriculture.

**Financial penalties for environmental harm:** citizens called for the introduction of penalties based on the environmental impact of agricultural activities, such as pesticides, ensuring that polluters pay for the damage caused.

**Redirect subsidies:** they also urged policy-makers to shift public subsidies toward sustainable farming, ensuring that taxpayer money supports practices that protect nature and farmers.





## European Citizens' Initiatives

The demand for pesticide reduction has been further amplified through two major successful European Citizens' Initiatives (ECIs), garnering widespread support across the EU:

# 1

### Save Bees and Farmers!<sup>1</sup>

**Demands:**

**An 80% reduction** in the use of synthetic pesticides by 2030.

**A complete phase-out** of synthetic pesticides by 2035.

**Measures to restore** natural ecosystems in agricultural areas.

**Financial and technical support** for farmers to transition to agroecological practices.

# 2

### Stop Glyphosate<sup>2</sup>

**Demands:**

**An outright ban** on glyphosate-based herbicides in the EU.

**Reform of the pesticide approval** process to ensure greater transparency and scientific scrutiny.

**Setting EU-wide mandatory** reduction targets for pesticide use.

## Eurobarometers <sup>3-4-5-6</sup>

The Eurobarometer surveys, conducted by the European Commission, consistently reveal strong public support for pesticide reduction and environmental protection:



**Safety concerns:** A significant majority of EU citizens express concern about pesticide residues in food and the broader environmental impact of pesticide use.



**Health and environment:** Citizens prioritise health protection and environmental sustainability, advocating for policies that reduce chemical inputs in agriculture and promote biodiversity.

## Public consultation on Common Agricultural Policy <sup>7</sup>






A 2017 public consultation on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) found that EU citizens want the CAP to play a key role in tackling the climate crisis, protecting the environment, and biodiversity, reducing soil degradation and ensuring a more sustainable use of pesticides and fertilisers. However, current CAP funding is not sufficiently aligned with these goals, and public demand for a greener CAP remains high.





## IPSOS Survey - Pesticides, Play it Safe! <sup>8</sup>

A 2023 Ipsos survey confirmed the strong concerns EU citizens hold about the impacts of pesticides on their health and the environment. Key findings from the survey include:

-  **Mandatory Integrated Pest Management (IPM):** a majority of respondents support making IPM rules mandatory across the EU to minimise pesticide use, requiring farmers to use the least risky pest control methods, and lose access to EU public funds if not.
  -  **Banning the use of glyphosate**
  -  **Precautionary approach:** citizens want the EU to adopt a precautionary approach in regulating the use of pesticides, placing public health and environmental protection above all else.
  -  **Buffer zones:** there is strong demand for large buffer zones between areas where pesticides are used and sensitive areas, such as schools, homes, and natural reserves.
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### The path forward

The demands from EU citizens are clear: they are deeply worried about the severe impact of pesticide use on the environment and their health. They call on policy-makers to take ambitious measures to transition to more sustainable food and farming systems.

A broad scientific consensus supports those concerns and the need to reduce pesticide use<sup>9</sup>. Citizens want EU decision makers to take real steps for a future where agriculture can coexist with nature, where food production does not come at the expense of the destruction of the environment and public health. We can do it!





**PAN Europe** strives to eliminate hazardous pesticides in Europe, and replace pesticides by ecologically sound alternatives. PAN Europe is an expertise-based organisation, relying on science and engaging with national member and EU organisations, scientists, policy -makers, farmers and other stakeholders.

<https://www.pan-europe.info>



**Friends of the Earth Europe** campaigns for environmentally sustainable and socially just societies, unites more than 30 national organisations with thousands of local groups, and is part of the world's largest grassroots environmental network, Friends of the Earth International.

[www.friendsoftheearth.eu](http://www.friendsoftheearth.eu)



## References

- 1] [\*Save bees and farmers ! Towards a bee-friendly agriculture for a healthy environment\*](#) Commission registration number: ECI(2019)000016
- 2] [\*Ban glyphosate and protect people and the environment from toxic pesticides.\*](#) Commission registration number: ECI(2017)000002
- 3] 2019 Eurobarometer: [\*Food Safety in the EU\*](#)
- 4] 2020 Eurobarometer: [\*Making our food fit for the future - new trends and challenges\*](#)
- 5] 2022 Eurobarometer: [\*Food Safety in the EU\*](#)
- 6] 2024 Eurobarometer: [\*Attitudes of Europeans towards the environment\*](#)
- 7] 2017 Consultation of the European Commission on [\*Modernising and simplifying the Common Agricultural Policy\*](#)
- 8] 2023 IPSOS Report results - [\*PAN Europe: Pesticides, Play it Safe!\*](#)
- 9] See the following statements signed by hundreds of scientists:  
[\*We need a food system transformation - In the face of the Russia-Ukraine war, now more than ever\*](#), March 2022  
[\*Scientists call for ambitious Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation\*](#), December 2022  
[\*Scientists support the EU's Green Deal and reject the unjustified argumentation against the Sustainable Use Regulation and the Nature Restoration Law\*](#), July 2023