

# Joint Press Release

Brussels, 05/06/2024

## PAN Europe, Nature et Progrès and Bond Beter Leefmilieu take Belgium to Court on illegal authorisations of pesticides

**Three NGOs have sued the Belgian State for reauthorising 3 highly toxic pesticides containing abamectin. The EU regulation clearly states that this dangerous pesticide can only be used in completely closed systems. Instead, Belgium allows use in open air and tunnels until 2039, to the detriment of the environment and citizens' health.**

Martin Dermine, PAN Europe's executive director said: "Abamectin is reprotoxic and is highly toxic to the environment, with serious doubts on its genotoxicity to humans. The European Commission restricted its uses to systems that prevent any release of the substance into the environment".

Last April, Belgium issued 3 reauthorisations of abamectin-based insecticides Acaramik<sup>1</sup>, Safran<sup>2</sup> and Vargas<sup>3</sup> until 2039 for use in open air and tunnels.

Virginie Pissoort, campaigner at Nature et Progrès Belgique said: "While the European legislation has a clear definition of a greenhouse being a closed system, Belgium created its own guideline defining a greenhouse as a tunnel. This contradicts EU law".

The Belgian guideline on greenhouses<sup>4</sup> states that greenhouses must have walls and a roof, while pesticides can drift through the entrances and windows, as well as leak through the soil. This is in contradiction with the definition set in EU law<sup>5</sup>.

Heleen De Smet, campaigner at Bond Beter Leefmilieu said: "Flanders has more than 2000 ha covered with greenhouses. Available data show that water streams next to Flemish greenhouses contain up to 20 different pesticides in highly toxic concentrations. It is about time our administration respects EU law".

A recent report<sup>6</sup> by PAN Europe evidenced that Belgium was one of the countries with highest pesticide residues in water streams next to greenhouses and that greenhouses throughout Europe led to a widespread environmental contamination of pesticides at concentrations that were sometimes 60 times higher than the acceptable environmental limits.

Martin Dermine concluded: "PAN Europe has also initiated in 2023 a court case before the General Court of the EU on abamectin. Scientific evidence shows that the concept of 'closed system' is not respected by Member States, and these pesticides leak into the environment because of maladministration by pro-pesticides public authorities. We count on the judiciary systems both in the EU and in Belgium to redress this situation."

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pan-europe.info/sites/pan-europe.info/files/public/resources/press-releases/Acaramik%20BE.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.pan-europe.info/sites/pan-europe.info/files/public/resources/press-releases/authorisation\\_9878P\\_B.pdf](https://www.pan-europe.info/sites/pan-europe.info/files/public/resources/press-releases/authorisation_9878P_B.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.pan-europe.info/sites/pan-europe.info/files/public/resources/press-releases/authorisation\\_9981P\\_B.pdf](https://www.pan-europe.info/sites/pan-europe.info/files/public/resources/press-releases/authorisation_9981P_B.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> In French: <https://fytoweb.be/fr/guides/phytoprotection/quest-ce-quune-culture-sous-protection>

In Dutch: <https://fytoweb.be/en/node/1026>

<sup>5</sup> Article 3(27) from regulation (EU) 1107/2009 definition: "'greenhouse' means a walk-in, static, closed place of crop production with a usually translucent outer shell, which allows controlled exchange of material and energy with the surroundings and prevents release of plant protection products into the environment."

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.pan-europe.info/resources/reports/2023/12/it-rains-pesticides-greenhouses-end-myth-greenhouses-are-releasing>

**Pesticide Action Network (PAN Europe)** is a network of NGOs working to reduce the use of hazardous pesticides and have them replaced with ecologically sound alternatives. We work to eliminate dependency on chemical pesticides and to support safe sustainable pest control methods. Our network brings together over 45 consumer, public health and environmental organisations and women's groups from across Europe.

