

Brussels, 20/05/2020

On World Bee Day, the European Commission commits to putting biodiversity and public health above agribusiness profits

PAN Europe welcomes today's [publications](#) by the Commission, which, on World Bee Day, bring the protection of biodiversity as well as of public and environmental health to the forefront of European food policy, and commits to taking action to reduce chemical pesticide use in Europe under its Farm-to-Fork and Biodiversity Strategies.

The Commission [Farm-to-Fork](#) (F2F) and [Biodiversity Strategy](#) (BS) documents published today are a clear acknowledgment that current food production systems are completely unsustainable. The use of chemical pesticides in agriculture contributes to soil, water and air pollution as well as biodiversity loss, and can harm non-target plants, insects, birds, mammals and amphibians.

In its F2F, the European Commission acknowledges the urgency of reducing our dependency on pesticides, increasing organic agriculture and reversing biodiversity loss.

The ambition set forth in both the F2F and BS aims to reduce the overall use and risk of chemical pesticides by 50% by 2030 and the use of more hazardous pesticides by 50%; to replace pesticides with agroecological practices; to dedicate 25% of EU's agricultural land to organic agriculture by 2030; and finally for pesticides to be banned from EU urban green areas as well. New 'eco-schemes' in Member States will offer a major stream of funding to boost sustainable practices, including agro-ecology and agro-forestry.

Martin Dermine, Environment Policy Officer at PAN Europe says: *"The fact that the European Commission as a whole acknowledges the necessity to profoundly reform agriculture is a revolution in itself. Synthetic pesticides are major contributors to the decline of biodiversity; this shift by the European executive must now be followed by actions with a strict enforcement. We believe 50% is a progressive objective, but more ambition will be needed to restore biodiversity. Further milestones ought to be set to reach a synthetic pesticide-free agriculture within 2 decades in the EU".*

Hans Muilerman, PAN Europe's Chemicals Coordinator adds: *"For the first time in history, the European Commission dares to listen to the science, going against the interests of agribusiness and setting pesticide use reduction targets in its Farm-to-Fork and Biodiversity Strategies. After decades of fighting civil society, we hope the European Commission will now make sure Member States finally properly implement these targets and protect EU citizens and environment as the law already requires".*

Along with the two strategies published today, the Commission also delivered the long overdue [REFIT evaluation](#) of the Pesticide (EC 1107/2009) and Maximum Residue Limits in food (EC 396/2005) Regulations, as well as the implementation of the [Sustainable use of Pesticide Directive](#) (EC/128/2009).

Ironically, European Pesticide policy already requires that Member States give priority to non-chemical alternatives in agriculture, as well as to reducing dependency on the use of pesticides and to implementing



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Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Although this should have been the norm in Europe since 2014, unfortunately, as the report confirms, this is far from the truth.

Henriette Christensen, PAN Europe Senior Policy Adviser on Agriculture says: *“The transition to sustainable farming is impossible without the support of the farmers. For more than a decade, PAN Europe has been [collecting evidence](#) on how to make real Integrated Pest Management work, where the use of synthetic pesticides becomes an exception rather than being the norm. We look forward to sharing this information with farmers and to developing this further together”.*

The Pesticide Regulation 1107/2009, which has been in force since 2011, is underpinned by the precautionary principle and aims to ensure that pesticide use causes no harm to human, animal or the environment. Yet certain pesticides, which scientific evidence shows cause harm to the environment or even to humans, are still in the market.

Angeliki Lyssimachou, Science and Policy Officer at PAN Europe expresses concerns: *“In its REFIT report, the Commission claims that the pesticide authorisation works generally well, turning a blind eye to the many issues related to conflicts of interests, the selective use of scientific literature and the lack of sensitive testing”.*

As stated in F2F strategy pesticide risk reduction is so far measured using the Harmonised Risk Indicators (HRI), which are falling short, as they are not designed to take into account environmental impact and are largely based on testing provided by the industry.

According to PAN Europe, several of the real issues concerning the pesticide authorisation procedure have not been addressed in the leaked REFIT report [[PAN Europe's analysis](#)].

“We were expecting the Commission to bring up for discussion the fundamental shortcomings of the current pesticide authorisation procedure, which fails to capture the real toxicity of pesticides and grants them market access. It is pointless to talk about pesticide use and risk reduction targets if the toxicity is not properly assessed and therefore is neglected until major harms have been caused” adds Lyssimachou.

Nevertheless, PAN Europe is pleased that pesticide use reductions now have a central place in the European agenda, and hopes this will be followed by concrete actions in the European Green Recovery package. In order to become successful, IPM will need to be strictly enforced, as it is mandatory since 2014 but not implemented at Member State level. Pesticide reduction targets should also concern pesticide residues in food in order to better protect people's health.

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 40 consumer, public health, and environmental organisations, and women's groups from across Europe.



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Through its [Citizens for science in pesticide regulation](#) campaign, PAN Europe advocates for a thorough reform of the pesticide authorisation system so that independent science is correctly taken into account and in order to better protect human health against endocrine disruptors, neurodevelopmental toxicity or immunotoxicity that are currently not properly assessed.

PAN Europe is one of the founders of the [Save Bees and Farmers](#) European Citizens Initiative asking for an 80% reduction of synthetic pesticides by 2030 and 100% by 2035.

[European Court of Auditors Special Report Feb 2020](#), see [PAN Europe's response](#).

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