



Pesticide newsletter

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Jurisdictional news



France: Anti-Pesticide Activist Convicted in a SLAPP

The professionals of Bordeaux wines fear for their brand image and did not hesitate to drag Valérie Murat, spokeswoman of the NGO *Alerte aux Toxiques*, into a [Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation](#) (SLAPP). SLAPPs are lawsuits that are more and more used by the industry to intimidate activists ([see newsletter N°1](#)). They obtained her conviction for "denigration of Bordeaux wines"!

Following the publication of analyses showing traces of pesticides in 22 wines with the HVE (High Environmental Value) label by *Alerte aux Toxiques* in September 2020, the *Comité Interprofessionnel des Vins de Bordeaux* (CIVB) and about thirty professionals from the region took legal action for denigration of Bordeaux wines, causing serious harm to the owners and the wine industry.

The case was judged on February 25, 2021 by the court of Libourne, which blamed Valerie Murat for not having mentioned that the levels of pesticides found in bottles are below the maximum limits of authorized residues and to have used "a communication deliberately anxiogenic, without any explanation on the mode of hazards of a substance, or on the levels found". The court condemns "a voluntarily truncated and denigrating report that cannot be considered as measured" and sentences the NGO to pay the staggering sum of 125,000 € in damages. The group will also have to remove the pesticide analyses from its website and social networks within 15 days, with a penalty of 500 € per day of delay.

This judgment is a very hard blow to *Alerte aux Toxiques*, a very small NGO with very limited resources, created by Valérie Murat, the daughter of a winegrower who died in 2012 of a cancer recognized as an occupational disease. In a strategy typical of these new lawsuits, CIVB has used its considerable financial resources to stifle a small group of activists by claiming damages far beyond its possibilities, channeling its energy into defending its survival instead of denouncing toxic practices.

Valerie Murat considers herself condemned by a justice that "prevents from criticizing the practice of winegrowing that allows the use of the most dangerous pesticides on the market". For her lawyer, it is a "social execution".

Mrs. Murat has announced that she will appeal the decision. However, the execution of the sentence is not suspensive and the group must pay the sum of 125,000 € and de-publish the contentious analyses.

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