



## **Pesticide newsletter**

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### **Regulatory news**



#### **United States: Banning pesticides in New York parks**

New York City [is banning pesticides](#) in parks, playgrounds and other public spaces. The decision comes after a group of children protested for several years to get rid of these substances.

In 2014, school teacher Paula Rogovin initiated a class discussion on the effects of pesticides on human health as well as on ecosystems. This collective reflection led the group of students to mobilize for a ban on toxic pesticides in public spaces in their city. For seven years, young people, parents and teachers have been trying to get the city's political leaders to listen. Today, their goal seems to have been achieved. New York is on track to become the largest city in the United States to ban the use of toxic pesticides in public spaces and is committed to organic and environmentally friendly gardening techniques.

The passage of this bill took place on Earth Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021. City Council member Ben Kallos previously proposed a similar version of this legislation in 2014 to ban pesticides in parks, but was unsuccessful in the face of resistance

from City Hall and the Parks Department. Nevertheless, public housing residents and environmental advocacy groups teamed up with Ms. Rogovin's students and their parents to secure enough City Council sponsorships.

It took seven years of advocacy by the children, from elementary school through their early teens, to achieve the ban. This long struggle taught them, according to one of the activists, 12-year-old Ana Schwartz, who has been fighting since she was five, that "if you want to make change, you have to be really passionate". In addition, a [report](#) by the Black Institute found that predominantly African-American neighborhoods (Harlem, Queens and Brooklyn) had been treated with toxic pesticides in far greater proportions than affluent, predominantly white neighborhoods, and that the gardeners and city workers responsible for maintaining public spaces were predominantly from black and Latino groups. The hazards of pesticide use particularly affect the poorest populations, as well as discriminated minorities.

Other U.S. municipalities have undertaken similar regulatory measures. The city of [Baltimore](#), for example, expanded its list of banned pesticides in 2020. In [Chicago](#), the use of chemical weed killers in parks has been reduced by 90% since 2014.

This news raises questions about the levers of action in the hands of mayors and localities in implementing ambitious pesticide regulation measures. Where large U.S. cities seem to have the powers to legislate bans on toxic substances, French mayors who have banned pesticides on the territory of their municipality have been challenged in administrative courts and had their claims [dismissed](#) by the Council of State in December 2020.

While the American and French political and institutional systems differ widely from one another, it is to be hoped that the increase in pesticide bans in the world's major cities may give more weight to the arguments of French mayors.

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