



Pesticide newsletter

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Jurisdictional news



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Italy: Wine producers loose their appeal against Conegliano's anti-pesticide referendum

Following the [demands](#) of citizens and many local groups, the small town of Conegliano, in Veneto, in northeastern Italy, held a referendum in 2018 on banning all synthetic pesticides in the municipality.

But in this region, known to be a major producer of the famous Prosecco (sparkling Italian white wine), the demand for environmental and health protection seem to clash with the economic interests of industrial agriculture. The major federations of wine producers (1) challenged the validity of the "Conegliano without pesticides" referendum, first with the Ministry of the Interior, and then with a second extraordinary appeal, to the President of the Italian Republic. The latter delegated the decision to the Council of State. In its [decision of May 20th, 2021](#),

the Italian Council of State rejected the appeal of the producers and supported the legality of the referendum of Conegliano.

The city of Conegliano is not the first in Italy to take such an initiative. A few years earlier, in 2014, the municipality of Malles Venosta in South Tyrol organized a [referendum](#) to ban pesticides in public and private areas in the city. The participation rate reached 69% and 76% of the voters were in favor of the ban. As a result, the mayor of the municipality, Ulrich Veith, established a 50-meter pesticide-free perimeter around homes, which is equivalent to a total ban, given the small size of the plots (2.5 to 3 ha on average), and Malles Venosta became [the first European municipality without pesticides](#). As in Veneto, the economy of the region is largely based on agriculture (fruit production) and tourism. A quarter of the total EU apple production comes from South Tyrol. With the support of the provincial agricultural adviser Arnold Schuler, legal proceedings against the municipality and [the environmentalists](#) have been engaged. So far, all judgments have been in favor of the municipality, but some appeals are still pending and the last conventional farmers in the region are still ignoring the new municipal regulation.

The refusal of the Council of State to invalidate the referendum on the ban on pesticides in Conegliano strengthens the anti-pesticide initiatives of European municipalities and local authorities. These are increasingly being asked to take a position on the use of these chemicals on their territories. An awareness of the risks of pesticides seems to be emerging in many municipalities, through the personal conviction of elected officials or in response to pressure from their constituencies.

- (1) The two appeals came from the three most important farmers' federations in Italy (*Federazione provinciale Coldiretti Treviso, C.I.A.-Confederazione italiana agricoltori Treviso, et Confagricoltura Treviso*), in collaboration with the two biggest Prosecco Denominations of Origin (*Consorzio di tutela DOCG prosecco et Consorzio di tutela del vino prosecco Conegliano e Valdobbiadene*).

[Back to Justice Pesticides website](#)