



Pesticide newsletter

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Civil Society Activities



Ending blind spots on agro-chemicals

In the context of the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) in May 2020, the European Commission has announced as a target a reduction of 50% of the use and risk of pesticides by 2030. What this target means in practice remains open but, in any event, another question must be addressed in priority for this commitment to have any meaning: do we have or will we have precise, reliable and up-to-date data on the use of pesticides to assess progress towards this target?

For now, the answer is no. Indeed, the current European regulation on [the collection and publication of the data on pesticides use for statistics analysis](#) is inadequate. It only requires the collection of this data every five years, and only for the crops that each Member States consider relevant. This data is collected in the form of surveys filled by farmers who are free not to participate. This law also foresees that the data can only be published on [Eurostat's website](#) in aggregated form per groups of pesticides (as opposed to per active substance or product).

What is the result of these rules? Incomplete out-of-date public data that are of no use for the public authorities to monitor progress towards reduction targets. The current data is also of no use to the farmers who would like to showcase

their efforts and compare with practices in other countries for the same crop. It is of no use to residents of rural areas who want to know what pesticides they are or have been exposed to.

The European Commission, made aware of the limitations of the current EU law on pesticides statistics thanks notably to a [report](#) from the European Court of Auditors and an [analysis](#) from its own services (Eurostat), has proposed a legislative [reform](#) in February 2021. The European Parliament has adopted its [position](#) on the proposal in October, calling for a few amendments to guarantee notably the publication of the data at the level of the active substance and product. The European Parliament is also calling for the collection of data not only for pesticides but also for biocidal and veterinary medicinal products that are also used in agriculture and [raise health concerns, notably to pollinators](#).

The Council (composed of the competent ministries of each Member State) has yet to adopt its position. [Public information](#) reveals 'concerns' from Member States regarding key proposals of the Commission, such as the yearly collection of pesticides' use data (instead of every 5 years) and the obligation for Member States to collect the records that farmers already have to keep on their pesticides' use (as opposed to collecting data via surveys).

The negotiation between the Commission, the Council and the Parliament (also called trilogues), are expected to begin in January 2022 when France will take over the Council's presidency. Many organizations defending the environment, including beekeepers associations, have reacted and written to their governments in November (e.g. the [joint letter](#) sent to national representatives in Brussels; similar letters were sent in different countries). Stay tuned!

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