



Pesticides in the European Union

Authorisation and Use

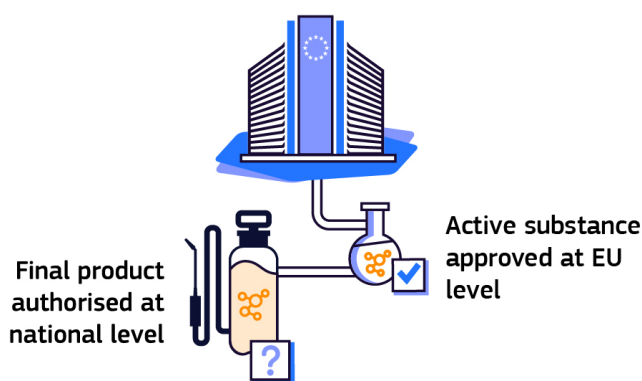


'We all want to have safe food produced in an ethical and sustainable manner with the minimum impact on our environment. The European Commission is committed to ensure the safety of pesticides, to minimise their risks and to seek and encourage less noxious or aggressive alternatives at every opportunity.'

Vytenis Andriukaitis, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

1 Pesticides in the EU are safe and constantly monitored

The EU regulatory system is the strictest in the world. The approval of the active substance – the component that actually kills the pest/plant disease – comes after a rigorous and thorough science-based risk assessment. The decision is not taken by one single individual or one single body – [the assessments are conducted jointly by the European Food Safety Authority \(EFSA\) and the national authorities in the EU countries](#). The companies applying for authorisation must present thorough and comprehensive data to fulfil the requirements set at EU level which address all potential risks. **Only substances for which there is objective evidence of safe use are approved.**



The EU approves the active substance, but the final products are authorised by each national authority. National governments decide what products can be sold on their national markets to the consumers, what formulae those products have and how they can actually be used in the field. The rules allow EU countries to refuse or restrict the sale of pesticides based on the agricultural and environmental circumstances on their territory.

Pesticides are authorised on a case-by-case basis for specific uses, which have to be respected by professionals (industry, farmers) and individuals. Member States have to enforce the correct use of pesticides and verify that such uses are under control by monitoring the environment. The Commission is auditing regularly the implementation of the legislation in the pesticide area and follows up on shortcomings. All the reports of these audits are [public](#).

2 The EU restricts or bans dangerous substances

An EU review involving the European Commission, EFSA and Member States has been performed in the past 25 years on all the substances used in Europe. The number of approved active substances in pesticides has been cut down by 50%. **There used to be more than 1000 active substances, now only some 500 are available and among them around 25% are micro-organisms, insects' pheromones and plant extracts considered of low risk.** In 2013 the Commission restricted the use of three neonicotinoid pesticides to protect bees. In 2016 the Commission asked EU Member States to limit the use of

glyphosate in particular circumstances (in the vicinity of public parks and playgrounds) and banned a dangerous co-formulant EU-wide.

~ 500 active substances approved nowadays...



...out of ~ 1 000 substances available on the EU market 25 years ago

3 The EU supports the sustainable use of pesticides

In order to reduce the dependency on the use of pesticides, the EU law stipulates that users must apply the principles of integrated pest management, which favours prevention and prioritises the use of low risk pesticides and non-chemical methods.

[The EU report on the sustainable use of pesticides](#) reflects the actions undertaken by each EU country to implement these legal obligations on their territory and the steps to be taken to improve the current situation. A lot has been achieved in recent years:



Aerial spraying is banned and exceptions are only granted under strict conditions.



Four million farmers have been trained to use pesticides safely



900,000 sprayers have been tested for accurate and safe application.



The number of EU approved low risk and/or non-chemical pesticide substances has doubled since 2009.



Pesticide use is prohibited or minimised in public parks, sport grounds, hospitals and schools.



Rivers, lakes, ground water and drinking water must be protected against pesticides.



Farmers must implement Integrated Pest Management and give preference to non-chemical methods if they provide satisfactory pest control.

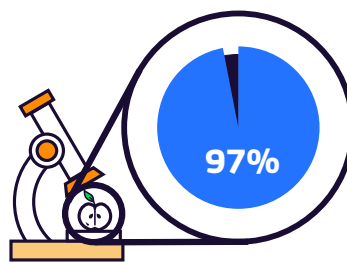


Organic farming crops now cover 6.7 % of EU Agricultural Area and organic production has increased by 18.7 % from 2012 to 2016 according to [Eurostat](#).

4 The EU monitors the level of pesticide residues in food, including imports

For 15 years, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has provided a comprehensive annual report on the levels of pesticide residues in food and feed (MRLs). 97% of the analysed samples are below the safety thresholds agreed at EU level. The Commission harmonised all MRLs and is currently working to develop a methodology to take into account cumulative and possible synergistic effects of pesticides (cumulative risk assessment). Controls at the EU borders ensure that imported food complies with EU safety standards - the Commission established in 2010 a list of food and feed that require an increased level of official controls prior to their introduction

into the EU (on the basis of known or emerging risks, including the possible presence of pesticide residues).



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About glyphosate

Glyphosate is the most frequently used herbicide both worldwide and in the EU. It has been first approved in the EU in 2002. Products containing glyphosate are used primarily to combat weeds that compete with cultivated crops or present problems for other reasons (e.g. on railway tracks). The substance has been thoroughly assessed by Member States, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Chemical Agency (ECHA) in recent years - to establish whether its use results in any unacceptable effects on human and animal health or the environment. All these reviews found that glyphosate is safe. On 27 November 2017 EU Member States endorsed a proposal to renew the approval of glyphosate for a period of 5 years. The renewal act requires that Member States re-assess all the glyphosate-based products available in their territories, paying particular attention to the protection of operators and amateur users and to the risk to biodiversity.