

PRESS RELEASE

BOLD PESTICIDE REDUCTION PLAN FACES ATTACK ON SATURDAY

BRUSSELS, 6 DECEMBER – EU plans to cut pesticide use and risk by half and protect the most sensitive environments could be torpedoed by farm ministers on Saturday 10 December.

The proposal for the first legally binding EU pesticide cuts were [tabled](#) in June by the European Commission, following nearly two decades of failed efforts to reduce harmful farm chemicals, and more recent successful European Citizens' Initiatives ([one](#), [two](#)) and criticism from the European Parliament.

But now it is feared that farm ministers could shoot down the Commission's proposal to reduce pesticides. As early as next [Saturday](#), ministerial representatives in Brussels are expected to hold a definitive vote [1] on a [plan](#) to ask the Commission for an additional 'impact assessment'. The delay means the legislation may not be adopted before the next European elections, at which point it would be "killed", according to [anonymous diplomats](#). The Commission has already reportedly offered to water down protections for sensitive social groups and ecological habitats, to accommodate ministers.

In a press conference today, scientists, small-scale farming and organic agriculture movements and the initiators of the successful European Citizens' Initiative '[Save Bees and Farmers](#)' called on the EU governments to swiftly and constructively negotiate the legislative proposal without demanding a further impact assessment.

Classified minutes from a November meeting of ministers, obtained by Global 2000, show that 17 of 26 ministers want the additional impact assessment, including Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, while Germany, France, Spain, Croatia, Cyprus, Belgium and Sweden oppose. A qualified majority is needed to win the vote.

GLOBAL 2000 chemicals expert, and co-initiator of the European Citizens' Initiative Save Bees and Farmers, Dr Helmut Burtscher-Schaden, said: "Some ministers are using 'paralysis by analysis' to try and kill this bold pesticide plan. They point to the Ukraine food crisis as justification, but their opposition fits a pattern of protecting big agri interests that stretches back nearly 2 decades. This is extremely short-sighted. A majority seem to have lined up on the wrong side of the argument, but there could still be changes, so the vote outcome is still not certain."

But 660 scientists [voiced](#) their support for the Commission's pesticide plan on 18 March.

Professor Josef Settele of IPBES, lead signatory, said: "Current political efforts to abandon the sustainability goals of the European Green Deal, including the reduction of pesticide use and the restoration of biodiversity, do not protect us from the current food crisis, but lead to a worsening and make the crisis permanent. Already, global warming and biodiversity loss are affecting crop yields and livelihoods worldwide. The window of opportunity to ensure a livable future on this planet through decisive and targeted action is closing fast. If we fail today to initiate the necessary transformation of our food system as outlined in the Farm to Fork strategy, this situation will worsen considerably."

President of IFOAM Organics Europe, Jan Plagge, said: "More than three hundred thousand organic farmers across Europe prove every day that farming models like organic and other agroecological practices, that do not use synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, can contribute to the preservation of biodiversity and at the same time provide healthy food in best quality and sufficient quantity. To keep it that way, we need to protect our

ecosystems. Reducing synthetic pesticides use and increasing agricultural diversity is essential to protect the natural resources on which we depend to produce our food. IFOAM Organics Europe therefore calls on all Member States to continue working constructively on the SUR."

The farmer Ramona Duminicioiu from Eco Ruralis association, representing over 17,000 farmers and small producers in Romania says: "Romania is a country of small scale farmers, having more than 4 million people active in agriculture with more than 90 % of farmers working less than 5 hectares. We are sure that the strictest possible regulation of all chemical inputs in agriculture is welcome for small and medium producers because it contributes to lowering the costs of production which is critical in the current crisis. It contributes to the health of the environment, consumers and of people who work or come into direct contact with these toxic substances. We are capable to produce all the necessary food and even better food, without the high costs of chemicals."

[1] & [2] The draft [proposal](#) will not be ready for a formal vote at the [AGRIFISH meeting](#) of 11 & 12 December, so ministers have delegated the decision to a vote by representatives [meeting](#) on Saturday, according to GLOBAL 2000 sources. The decision will be added to a later council meeting as an [A-point](#), adopted at the end of the meeting without discussion, perhaps one on [19 December](#). The unusually rushed process is being pushed by the Czech EU presidency, which wants to conclude the matter before its term expires in the New Year.

A [briefing on the EU's failure to reduce pesticides and current opposition to the plan](#) is available on IFOAM Organics Europe's website.

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For more information please contact:

[Dr. Helmut Burtscher-Schaden](#), GLOBAL 2000 chemicals expert, +43 699 14 2000 34
and Press Officer, [Selina Englmaier](#)
or visit www.savebeesandfarmers.eu and <http://www.global2000.at/>

[Amélie Steu](#), Policy Coordinator on CAP, Pesticides and Animal Welfare
and [Eva Berckmans](#), Communications Manager, +32 2 416 52 32
or visit <http://www.organicseurope.bio/>

About the organisers

The ["Save Bees and Farmers!" European Citizens' Initiative](#) is a broad alliance of [over 200](#) civil society organisations, grassroots movements, beekeepers organisations, local citizens' initiatives, farming groups and environmental scientists. The aim of the alliance is to create an agricultural landscape in Europe which enables bees and farmers to thrive in a healthy environment for the benefit of all. The ECI "Save Bees and Farmers" was submitted to the European Commission with the support of 1,2 millions European citizens. The key demands of the ECI are: a phase out of synthetic pesticides, measures to recover biodiversity and support for farmers.

[IFOAM Organics Europe](#) is the European umbrella organisation for organic food and farming. With almost 200 members in 34 European countries, our work spans the entire organic food chain and beyond: from farmers and processors organisations, retailers, certifiers, consultants, traders and researchers to environmental and consumer advocacy bodies. In 2022, IFOAM Organics Europe is turning 20, IFOAM Organics International 50 and IFOAM Asia 10. [Celebrate the Year of Organics with us!](#)

[GLOBAL 2000](#) is an independent Austrian environmental organisation and a member of Friends of the Earth, the largest international network of environmental organisations. GLOBAL 2000 closely monitors the development of environmental policy in Austria and is committed to ecological fairness and a future worth living both locally and around the globe.