



Joint statement - A strong EU Nature Package to tackle the climate, health and biodiversity crises

June 16, 2022

On June 22, the European Commission is expected to publish two crucial legislative proposals to implement the EU Green Deal. The “Nature Protection Package” includes the EU Nature Restoration Law and the revision of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (the Pesticides Reduction Regulation). **We call on the Commission to publish the two Regulations on the planned date and introduce ambitious and binding targets to stop irreversible biodiversity breakdown.**

The new Pesticides Reduction Regulation and Nature Restoration Law are the first essential pieces of legislation to bring the commitments of the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategy to life. Without ambitious, legally binding targets, and strong measures to achieve them, the EU Green Deal as a whole is at risk.

Just as with the climate crisis, the science is clear: we cannot afford any further inaction and delay when it comes to addressing biodiversity decline and ecosystem collapse¹. It is therefore crucial for the EU not to succumb to the pressure from vested corporate interests. The war in Ukraine is being used by agribusiness lobbies as a pretext to amplify the attacks on the EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies’ objectives². These lobbies are trying to scaremonger EU decision makers with claims that the Strategies would lead to a drop in food production, based on partial and limited

¹ See for example: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/> and <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment>

² <https://corporateeurope.org/en/2022/03/loud-lobby-silent-spring>

studies funded by the industry itself³. The first delay of the Nature Package (initially expected at the end of March) was a worrying signal⁴.

These vested interests are making misleading claims around agricultural productivity, creating a false dichotomy between nature preservation and food production. They defend a broken food system that destroys small and medium-scale farming and keeps food producers locked in unsustainable farming practices like pesticide use. Independent science has linked exposure to synthetic pesticides to severe illnesses like cancer and Parkinson's disease⁵ and the first people affected, farmers and farm workers, are currently being left to fend for themselves.

As civil society organizations⁶, scientists⁷ and several decision makers⁸ have maintained, watering down environmental ambitions is the wrong policy response to the crisis we face. Furthermore, it has been scientifically proven that pesticide reduction is totally compatible with food security. New studies even show that the farmers can increase earning by applying good agronomic practices⁹. This is the moment to ramp up efforts for the transition towards a more just and environmentally-friendly food system based on agroecology, rather than taking a step back.

The war in Ukraine has highlighted not only the destructive impacts of a deregulated global market on food and the consequent dangers of food autonomy loss for countries now facing very strong food security pressure, but also the resilience of small farms in Ukraine itself, which are the ones currently working on meeting the country's food needs. The legislative proposals of the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies must be carried through to keep the course towards global food sovereignty.

The Pesticides Reduction Regulation (i.e. the revision of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive) and Nature Restoration Law have the potential to become real game-changers to address the interlinked climate, biodiversity and health crises, promote sustainable food systems and safeguard our long-term food security.

³ https://www.clientearth.org/media/x3yng0dx/food-security-fact-sheet_q-a-020622.pdf

⁴ <https://friendsoftheearth.eu/press-release/delaying-the-eu-pesticide-law-revision-could-lead-to-years-of-toxic-inaction/>

⁵ <https://presse.inserm.fr/en/inserm-publishes-its-latest-collective-expert-review-on-the-health-effects-of-pesticides/43303/>

⁶ <https://foodpolicycoalition.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Joint-open-letter-EU-food-supply-and-solidarity-response-to-the-war-in-Ukraine.-March-2022.pdf>

⁷ <https://zenodo.org/record/6366132#.Ypoo3-xBy5f>

⁸ <https://eeb.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/SUD-Joint-Statement.pdf>

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/timmermans-scaremongering-on-food-security-dishonest-irresponsible/>

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_22_2528

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/german-agri-minister-sustainable-farming-key-for-independence-from-russia/>

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-9-2022-06-06-ITM-019_EN.html

⁹ See for example: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0921800922001276>,

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-017-01410-w>, and

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Daniel-Mutyambai/publication/351665147_Can_agroecology_improve_food_security_and_nutrition_A_review/links/621482556c472329dcfcf5f7/Can-agroecology-improve-food-security-and-nutrition-A-review.pdf?origin=publication_detail

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We look forward to the publication of an ambitious Nature Protection Package next week and urge the EU to take into account the demands of civil society made in previous statements¹⁰ (including in letters sent by NGOs to their national governments¹¹), as well as the 1.2 million citizens asking for an 80% reduction in the use of synthetic pesticides by 2030 and a full phase out by 2035 in the European Citizens Initiative Save Bees and Farmers¹².

The European Commission has the responsibility to act now¹³; to save the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies, and put Europe on a path of recovery for people and nature.

Signatories

Agroecology Europe
Beelife
Birdlife
ClientEarth
Corporate Europe Observatory
Euro Coop
European Agroforestry Federation (EURAF)
European Coordination La Via Campesina (ECVC)
European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
European Federation of Trade Unions in the Food, Agriculture and Tourism (EFFAT)
Fair Trade Advocacy Office (FTAO)
Feedback Europe
Foodwatch
Friends of the Earth Europe
Greenpeace
Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)
IFOAM Organics Europe
Justice Pesticides
Oceana
PAN Europe
Seas at Risk
Slow Food
The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)
Urgenci International Network of Community Supported Agriculture

¹⁰ https://eeb.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/NGO-letter-nature-restoration-law_2021_12_final.pdf
<https://eeb.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/SUD-Joint-Statement.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.savebeesandfarmers.eu/eng/news/coalitions-of-organisations-demand-pesticide-reduction/>

¹² <https://www.savebeesandfarmers.eu/eng/>

¹³ See also: https://eeb.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/EEB-Comment-Delay-pesticide-legislation_Rev241_AD_EC33.pdf