



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

Directorate E - Twin Transition, Economic & Social Affairs
The Director

Brussels
SG.E.2/MG

Ms Angeliki Lysimachou
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Dear Ms Lysimachou,

Thank you for your open letter on pesticides of 5 November 2020 addressed to Executive Vice-President Timmermans, Commissioners Kyriakides, Wojciechowski and Sinkevičius. They have asked me to reply on their behalf. You raise two key issues: the export of pesticides not approved for use in the EU and the import of agricultural products made with pesticides that are banned in Europe.

On the first issue, under the Rotterdam Convention that covers trade in this area, third countries are free to choose whether to import certain hazardous chemicals such as pesticides. The EU's Regulation that implements the Convention goes further and, for a greater number of chemicals than are covered by the Convention (currently 120 versus 52), requires that importing countries give their explicit consent to such imports. The Regulation also ensures that importing countries receive a range of information about the chemicals in question to assist them in their decisions. As you recognise in your statement, as part of its action on the European Green Deal, the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability nevertheless aims to go further still, by preventing the export of hazardous chemicals, including pesticides, banned in the EU. The Commission is currently considering the various options for implementing this objective, including a revision of the legislation.

On the second issue, agricultural products can only be marketed in the EU if pesticide residues are below levels that are considered safe for consumers (maximum residue levels or MRLs). EU legislation also sets MRLs for pesticides that are authorised outside the EU, so called import tolerances. The reason for this is that producers in third countries face production conditions and pests that might require the use of different pesticides from those used in the EU. While these import tolerances ensure that the health of European consumers is protected, they also facilitate trade and support the livelihood of farmers, including those in developing countries, for whom agricultural exports to the EU are a major source of income. At the same time, we need to ensure that we do not shift environmental problems to other parts of the world. The Commission has therefore

started to reflect on the concerns that import tolerances create, in line with the Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU's international commitments.

Yours sincerely,

e-signed
John WATSON