



Brussels, February 26, 2020

*Letter addressed to
Vice-President Timmermans,
Commissioner Kyriakides,
Commissioner Hogan,
Commissioner Breton,
Commissioner Wojciechowski,
Commissioner Sinkevicius*

Subject: Protection of European citizens from the import of products containing residues of hazardous pesticides prohibited for sale in the European Union

Dear Vice-President, Dear Commissioners,

We are writing to you to express our concern about current developments regarding the REFIT evaluations of the pesticide and MRL Regulations.

As you are certainly aware, products containing residues of pesticides banned in Europe continue to enter the European market. Regulation 1107/2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market has established so-called 'hazard-based cut-off criteria', leading to the prohibition of potentially dangerous substances in pesticides (carcinogenic, mutagenic, reprotoxic, endocrine disruptors). The previous Commission had stated that the existing residue levels for hazardous pesticides banned in the EU would be deleted and brought to the limit of detection. However, a report by the NGO Corporate Europe Observatory, published mid-February, revealed the intensity of lobbying by the agrochemical industries and several countries within the WTO, including the United States and Canada, in order not to let this happen. In fact, the Commission did not do anything so far to stop the import of products containing residues of pesticides banned in Europe-while about a quarter of the pesticides used in the United States are forbidden in Europe, as pointed out in the report. At the very time when the Commission is starting negotiations with the United States to reach a free trade agreement, this issue of hazardous pesticide residues is crucial and rightly worries our fellow European citizens, who are reassured by the health protection offered by the single market and by the regulations on pesticides.

The REFIT evaluation of the 2009 pesticides regulation and the 2005 regulation on pesticide residues in food was unfortunately engrossed by the industry lobbies, whose main objective was to reduce the regulatory burden on industry, instead of studying its effectiveness in terms of health and environmental protection. The last REFIT reports on pesticides and MRLs are due at the end of March 2020, at the same time as the publication of the Farm to Fork strategy. If residues of hazardous pesticides are not banned, the whole exercise would run counter to fair competition between farmers, but above all, it would seriously call into question our ability to protect the health of consumers.

We urge you, dear Commissioners, to adhere strictly to the European objectives of protecting health and the environment, and to stand by your commitments made in the name of the Green Deal. If you are serious about a non-toxic environment, you cannot allow residues of dangerous pesticides in our food and feed. Any action favouring private interests over the collective interest would undermine the confidence placed in your College by the European Parliament and by the citizens.

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