



## Hybrid Event: Revision of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive – Key challenges and new opportunities ahead



Wednesday 13 July 2022, 09:30 – 11:30 CEST

**Hybrid event co-hosted by MEP Irene Tolleret and MEP Stéphane Bijoux**

### Speakers:

- **MEP Stéphane Bijoux**
- **Maria Pilar Aguar Fernandez**, Director for 'Health & Food Audits & Analysis', DG SANTE, European Commission
- **Bernard Farges**, President, European Federation of Origin Wines (EFOW)
- **Gérard Bally**, Delegate General, EURODOM
- **Carsten Schmidt**, Chair of the Agriculture Working Group, EurEau
- **Eva Corral**, Senior Policy Officer for Pesticide and Water Pollution, EEB
- **MEP Asger Christensen**
- **MEP Irene Tolleret**

## Welcome Remarks

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### *MEP Stéphane Bijoux*

**“Agriculture can become a model of reconciliation between economic and green imperatives”**

**MEP Stéphane Bijoux** highlighted in his intervention that the objectives defined in the Farm to Fork Strategy are very ambitious and they require collective action to be successfully applied. MEP Bijoux stressed that the current agricultural targets cause substantial concerns for farmers and producers. Therefore, **actions at the international and national level should be consistent, taking into account the need of each industry and the specificity of each territory.** This includes the fight against unfair competition, by ensuring same requirements on imported agricultural product in the EU. Finally, **MEP Bijoux concluded stating the three necessary pillars to achieve a green transition: shared ambition, consistency and efficiency through action.**

## Presentations

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### *Maria Pilar Aguar Fernandez, Director for ‘Health & Food Audits & Analysis’, DG SANTE, European Commission*

**“What we want to achieve in the EU with the revision of the SUD directive, is the reduction of the overuse of pesticides and providing farmers with suitable alternatives and tools to fight pests”**

Following up in the discussion, Ms. Aguar Fernandez agreed with the points highlighted by MEP Bijoux, and mentioned that for many consumers the use of **pesticides is among the biggest concerns for food safety in Europe.** Keeping in mind the environmental and health issues that pesticides may cause, the Commission has issued a coherent Farm to Fork Strategy which focuses on mid- and long-term solutions. Moreover, Ms. Aguar Fernandez explained the key new features of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation (SUR), which is setting, among other priorities, **legally binding targets reducing the use and risk of chemical pesticides by 50% by 2030.** The Commission also wants to boost the implementation of

Integrated Pest Management by incentivizing farmers to use pesticides and chemicals only as a very last resort. Therefore, **farmers should be provided with suitable alternatives and tools to fight pests, other than pesticides**. In this regard, the possibility for Member States and farmers to use CAP funds to achieve compliance with the SUR obligations is foreseen.

**Bernard Farges, President, European Federation of Origin Wines (EFOW)**

**“The wine industry has committed in the last few years to use less pesticides”**

**Mr. Farges** started his intervention mentioning that the wine industry has been committed in the last few years to using less pesticides. This has been possible thanks to key aspects such as **reliable communication and sharing of information and best practices** among farmers and industries. However, **an important question was raised by Mr. Farges: “how can we count the pesticides that one uses?”**. The official methods to collect data when it comes to the use of pesticides are not fully reliable, since they doesn’t take into consideration the quality of the final products. Despite acknowledging the challenges in having a reliable pesticides data collection, **Mr. Farges called for more quality-related data evaluation**, which he considers as a key step for producers and wine growers to reduce the use of pesticides. Finally, regulations should be adapted to the type of products used by farmers, since wine growers who have been using organic products over many years should not comply with the same rules as those who have been using synthetic products.

**Gérard Bally, Delegate General, EURODOM**

**“When NGTs will be available, industries will not have to spend millions to fight parasites and diseases”**

**Mr. Bally** emphasised the effort to reduce pesticides in the banana sectors in humid tropical regions as well as the example set by the European Union. However, he stated one huge challenge: the invasion of black fungus and the impossibility of using aerial spraying in the EU to fight against it. Mr. Bally underlined that the alternatives proposed are not enough and **shed light on the benefits of NGTs in creating species tolerant to diseases**. In this regard, he stated that *“when NGTs will be available, industries will not have to spend millions to fight parasites and diseases”*.

*Carsten Schmidt, Chair of the Agriculture Working Group, EurEAU*

**“Water operators have to invest more and more to treat pesticide pollution in the aquatic environment and comply with DWD standards”**

**Mr. Schmidt** stated that the water consumer should not bear the cost of extra treatment, but the polluter-pays principle should be applied. Furthermore, **Mr. Schmidt underlined the need for an ambitious SUR**. In this sense, he stated that *“water operators have to invest more and more to treat pesticide pollution in the aquatic environment and comply with Drinking Water Directive standards”*. Moreover, he argued that **the new SUR will protect water resources better as it supports the inclusion of water used for the abstraction of drinking water under sensitive areas**. However, improvements are needed, specifically on the importance of information and access to information to identify and manage risks to human health.

*Eva Corral, Senior Policy Officer for Pesticide and Water Pollution, EEB*

**“Reducing the use of chemical pesticides and achieving a sustainable farming system that works with nature is possible in the short term”**

**Ms. Corral** started by saying that *“reducing the use of chemical pesticides and achieving a sustainable farming system that works with nature is possible in the short term”* and has numerous benefits for biodiversity, the environment, human health, and the economy. Moving on, she underlined that **the EU has to use the solutions that are already existing such as integrated pest management measures or applying common sense**. In this regard, she stated that *“it is very important that the revision of the SUR ensures that these common-sense practices are applied”*. To conclude, **she underlined the need for better indicators to improve progress in reduction targets** as well as the need to recognise the link between illness and the use of chemical pesticides.

*MEP Asger Christensen*

**“The EU has the technologies to reduce pesticides, but now there is a need to speed up”**

**MEP Mr. Christensen** stated that it is important to know that the EU can reduce the use of pesticides by up to 90%. He emphasised that **“the EU has the technologies to reduce**

*pesticides, but now there is a need to speed up*". In this regard, there is a need for more time, money and research, and support for innovation.

## Q&A Session

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MEP Ms. Tolleret kicked off the Q&A session by asking two questions: *"what role can the EU play in influencing the rest of the world in tackling the use of pesticides? How can the EU manage the authorisation procedure on biocontrols?"* Ms. Maria Pilar Aguar Fernandez answered the second question first, stating that the current procedure is not the most adequate, and intensive work is being undertaken to modify the procedure for biopesticides. Then, she recalled **that the SUD revision is about the sustainable use of pesticides in order to prevent their overuse and not in order to ban them**. In relation to the first question, she underlined that the EU is boosting its activity by entering into international fora to make sure that the EU initiatives to promote the sustainable use of pesticides are taken into consideration by third countries. **Ms. Corral** recalled the need for the Member States to commit to their obligations and to start reducing significantly the use of pesticides.

Moving on to the discussion, **Ms. Pilar Aguar Fernandez** stated the need for a gradual transition and that the ultimate goal is phasing out the more hazardous pesticides and speed up approval procedures for lower risk products.

Finally, a question was raised on NGTs as possible alternatives. An independent speaker working in impact assessment in biotechnology stated that the unattended effects of these techniques are not taken into account. In this regard, if the precautionary principle of NGTs is not respected and a risk assessment is in place, it will create more problems for biodiversity.

## Closing remarks

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### **MEP Irene Tolleret**

**"Given the current challenges, the EU has to fight with what it has as there are no miracles but only bad solutions"**

MEP Ms. Tolleret stated that *"given the current challenges, the EU has to fight with what it has as there are no miracles but only bad solutions"*. Hence, there is a need to work together as efficiently as possible.