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MEPs Dorfmann and Picaro's hometown citizens strongly exposed to toxic pesticides

Why are they pushing for even more pesticides?





Pesticide residues in dust samples taken in Felthurns and Bari, the hometowns of Herbert Dorfmann and Michele Picaro, the European Parliament Rapporteurs for the Pesticide Omnibus, show exposure to an average of 17 pesticide residues in citizens' houses. Most of them are highly toxic. Despite this important pesticide exposure, they both strongly support a deep deregulation of pesticides in the EU, putting citizens' health and the environment even more at risk. Europeans across the political spectrum massively reject this pesticide deregulation, it is urgent that Members of the European Parliament respect their will.

Introduction

In December 2025, the European Commission published a 'Food and Feed Safety' Omnibus regulation proposal, supporting a massive deregulation of pesticides and biocides in the EU, hence dismantling the fundamentals of citizens' health and environmental protection. Weirdly enough, this proposal completely disregarded the findings of a European Parliament Special 'PEST' Committee report from 2019[1] and a

1 European Parliament Report on the Union's authorisation procedure for pesticides (2019)

European Commission Fitness check report from 2020[2], that identified precisely some of the bottlenecks in the implementation of the pesticide legislation. Under the guise of 'simplification', instead of proposing measures to improve the implementation of the law, and the safety of citizens, the European Commission copy-pasted many of the long-lasting demands from the agribusiness sector[3].

With the 2024 European elections, the European Parliament has shifted towards a majority of conservative, and far-right political groups. Pushed in the back by business lobby groups, the Von der Leyen II Commission moved away from its efforts to build a sustainable future, and initiated strong deregulation in the EU.

In the European Parliament, the Commission proposal is dealt with by two 'Rapporteur' Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), namely Herbert Dorfmann (South Tyrol, Italy, European People's Party - EPP)[4] and Michele Picaro (Puglia, Italy, European Conservative and Reformists - ECR)[5].

In a draft report presented in June 2026, **the two conservative MEPs push for even more deregulation than the initial proposal from the Commission.** Among many provisions in the Rapporteurs' proposal, they want to provide unlimited authorisations to pesticide products at Member States' level, not only for active substances approved at EU-level, as proposed by the Commission. They further want to make tacit authorisation the rule, in case a national regulatory authority is too slow in managing an authorisation request, which is currently nearly systematically the case. They also want to expand the use of derogations for pesticides normally not authorised. Last but not least, the two MEPs push for 15-year approval periods for the most toxic pesticides, while they currently receive a 7-year period, in order to be more closely scrutinised. This attempt to weaken pesticide rules even further than the Commission was strongly opposed by civil society[6].

This political positioning is striking, as their fellow citizens are heavily exposed to pesticides and require additional protection, not less. Indeed, MEP Dorfmann comes from the province of **South Tyrol/Alto Adige**, which is **one of the areas where citizens are most exposed to pesticides in the EU[7].** On the one hand, the region is a massive producer and exporter of conventional apples, which is a highly pesticide-intensive crop. On the other hand, the topography of the region, where citizens mostly live in Alpine valleys, right where the pesticide-intensive crops (apples and vines) are grown, leads to increased exposure. In the same vein, the region of **Bari grows olives and grapes which are also pesticide-intensive crops** in conventional farming.

Via measurements of pesticide residues in household dust, **the present briefing aims at illustrating the daily exposure of some citizens from Bari and Felthurns to multiple pesticides**. Indeed, household dust is an interesting proxy to assess exposure to pesticides, as it contains residues of pesticides used the whole year round. They also enable us to assess which pesticides people are exposed to daily.

2 Pesticide regulation (EC) 1107/2009 Fitness check European Commission report (2020)
3 Food and Feed Omnibus, co-written by the Pesticide industry, Corporate Europe Observatory (2026)
4 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/96787/HERBERT_DORFMANN/home
5 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/257150/MICHELE_PICARO/home
6 https://www.pan-europe.info/resources/briefings/2026/10/joint-position-draft-parliamentary-report-and-tabled-amendments-food-and
7 https://esploradati.istat.it/databrowser/#/en/dw/categories/IT1,Z1000AGR,1.0/AGR_MEANS/DCSP_FITOSANITARI/IT1,101_22_DF_DCSP_FITOSANITARI_2,1.0
https://www.oekom.de/beitrag/gespritzte-aepfel-fuer-ganz-europa-141

Methods

Household dust was collected in the municipalities of Felthurns (South Tyrol/Alto Adige, Italy) and Bari (Puglia, Italy) according to the laboratory instructions from personal hover bags in volunteer homes in four locations: Felthurns, Valenzano (municipality of Bari), Noicattaro (municipality of Bari) and Capurso (municipality of Bari). The reason only one sample was taken in Felthurns, is that it was very difficult to find a volunteer willing to take part in the testing campaign.[8]

Dust samples were shipped by private carrier to PiCA Prüfinstitut Chemische Analytik GmbH (Berlin, Germany), and tested for ~600 pesticides or pesticide metabolites residues under international standard certification[9].

Results

1. Household exposure to cocktails of pesticides

Household dust samples **contained between 13 and 21 pesticide residues (average 17), with a total of 36 different substances detected**. Thirty six percent (36%) of the identified substances are approved in the EU exclusively as agricultural pesticides, while 17% (6 substances) are also approved as biocides (anti-mosquito/ant products, for instance) or veterinary medicines (pet flea and tick treatment). Twenty two percent (31%, 11 substances) were non-approved substances, some of them banned long ago.

Detected Substance	Detections	EU Approval Status	Key Toxicological & Environmental Information[10]
Acetamiprid	**1 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide	Evidence of neurotoxicity to humans, toxic to bees
9,10-Anthraquinone	**1 in 4 samples**	**Non-approved**	Carcinogenic 1B
Azoxystrobin	**2 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide	Moderately toxic, persistent in the environment
Captan (and THPI)	**1 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide	Carcinogen 2, Reprotoxic 2, toxic to bees
Carbendazim (& benomyl)	**1 in 4 samples**	**Non-approved**	Mutagenic 1B, Reprotoxic 1B
Chlorpyrifos-ethyl	**1 in 4 samples**	**Non-approved**	Neurotoxic to humans, toxic to bees
Climbazole	**1 in 4 samples**	Approved as cosmetics only	Endocrine disruptor
DDT (and breakdown products)	**1 in 4 samples**	**Non-approved**	Known endocrine disruptor, Persistent organic pollutant
Deltamethrin	**3 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide and biocide	Neurotoxic to mammals, highly toxic to bees
Dichlofluanid	**2 in 4 samples**	**Non-approved**	Biocide

8 A preliminary screening was first carried in Felthurns on different samples from different matrices (grass, soil, dust), based on the results it was decided to focus on house dust and collect three samples in Bari.
9 Method based on DIN EN 15662 and §64 LFGB L00.00-115, with an uncertainty of ± 50%
10 Based on EFSA and ECHA regulatory assessments, as well as on the renowned Pesticides Property Database.

Detected Substance	Detections	EU Approval Status	Key Toxicological & Environmental Information[10]
Endosulfan	**1 in 4 samples**	**Non-approved**	Persistent organic pollutant (POP)
Fipronil	**2 in 4 samples**	Approved as veterinary product only	Neurotoxic, toxic to bees; biocide authorization expired but still used in some countries
Fludioxonil	**4 in 4 samples**	Approved as Candidate for Substitution (CfS) pesticide	PFAS pesticide, endocrine disruptor (EDC)
Fluxapyroxad	**3 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide	Moderately toxic, persistent in the environment
Folpet (and phthalimide)	**4 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide	High toxicity to aquatic life, strong evidence of genotoxicity
Hexachlorocyclohexane (HCH)	**1 in 4 samples**	**Non-approved**	Carcinogenic (Carc. 2), known EDC, POP
Icaridin (picaridin)	**1 in 4 samples**	Approved as biocide only	Insect repellent
Imidacloprid	**3 in 4 samples**	Approved as biocide only	Neurotoxic, toxic to bees
IPBC	**1 in 4 samples**	Approved a biocide only	Wood treatment, cosmetics
Mandipropamid	**2 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide	Moderate toxicity
Metalaxyl & Metalaxyl-M	**1 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide (CfS)	Systemic fungicide
Penconazole	**3 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide	Reproductive toxicity (Repr. 2)
Pentachlorobenzene	**1 in 4 samples**	**Non-approved**	Known EDC
Permethrin	**3 in 4 samples**	Approved as biocide only (CFS)	Neurotoxic, toxic to bees
o-Phenylphenol	**1 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide and biocide	IARC Group 2B carcinogen (SOPP)
Piperonyl butoxide (PBO)	**4 in 4 samples**	Non approved as pesticide but approved as biocide and approved as pesticide synergist	Toxic to bees
Propiconazole	**1 in 4 samples**	Approved as biocide only (CFS)	Reprotoxic 1B, endocrine disruptor
Propoxur	**1 in 4 samples**	**Non-approved**	Probable carcinogen in the US
Pyriproxyfen	**3 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide and biocide	Neurotoxic
Spiroxamine	**1 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide	Reproductive toxicity 2

Detected Substance	Detections	EU Approval Status	Key Toxicological & Environmental Information[10]
Tebuconazole	**2 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide (CfS)	Reproductive toxicity 1B
Terbutryn	**2 in 4 samples**	**Non-approved**	Endocrine disruptor, possible carcinogen in the US
Thiabendazole	**1 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide and biocide	Endocrine disruptor
Thiophanate-methyl	**1 in 4 samples**	**Non-approved**	Neurotoxic, Carcinogen 2, Mutagen 2, Endocrine disruptor
Trifloxystrobin	**3 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide	PFAS pesticide
Zoxamide	**3 in 4 samples**	Approved as pesticide	High toxicity to aquatic life, moderate toxicity to humans

Table 1. List of detected substances in dust samples

2. Neurotoxic pesticides at home

Each house was contaminated with an average of four (4) neurotoxicants. While some of them have been banned in agriculture for environmental or health reasons like imidacloprid or fipronil, they remain authorised for use as biocides or veterinary medicines, e.g. to treat fleas or ticks, and contaminate citizens' homes in the long run. Others, such as deltamethrin are still strongly used in agriculture and are linked to having a negative impact on health, and in particular on the development of foetuses' and children's brains[11].

Neurotoxic pesticides	Information
Acetamiprid	Scientific evidence showing risk of developmental neurotoxicity - Could receive unlimited approval under the omnibus proposal
Chlorpyrifos-ethyl	Banned - Epidemiological evidence of harm on cognitive functions when exposure at early life stages
Deltamethrin	Strong scientific evidence suggesting developmental neurotoxicity
Fipronil	Banned as a pesticide but approved as veterinary medicine - Evidence of toxicity to humans
Imidacloprid	Banned as a pesticide but approved as veterinary medicine - Evidence of toxicity to humans
Permethrin	Banned as a pesticide but approved as veterinary medicine - Evidence of toxicity to humans
Pyriproxyfen	Highly toxic to aquatic environment.
Thiophanate-methyl	Banned

Table 2. Neurotoxic substances[12] detected in dust samples

3. Exposure to endocrine disruptors - urgent ban needed

Households were contaminated with an average of two (2) endocrine disrupting pesticides. The EU law is very clear though: citizens should not be exposed to pesticidal endocrine disruptors. A new UN assessment confirms that exposure in very small quantities can already harm development.

EDC pesticides	Information
Climbazole	Banned as pesticide/biocide - EU criteria
DDT	Banned - known EDC
Fludioxonil	EU criteria
Hexachlorocyclohexane (HCH),	known EDC
Pentachlorobenzene	Banned - known EDC
Propiconazole	EU criteria
Thiabendazole	EU criteria - Could receive unlimited approval under the omnibus proposal
Thiophanate-methyl	EU criteria

Table 3: Substances detected in dust samples with endocrine disrupting properties[13]

11 https://www.pan-europe.info/press-releases/2025/03/pesticide-deltamethrin-causes-brain-damage-offspring-safe-dose
12 According to the European Food Safety Authority
13 Endocrine disruption is here defined according to EU criteria or, for banned substances that escape regulatory scrutiny, according to scientific evidence in the peer reviewed literature

4. The most toxic pesticides still authorised

Each household is contaminated with an average of 2 pesticides that are on the '*Candidates for Substitution*' (CFS) list, i.e. substances particularly toxic that need to be phased out in priority by Member States.

CfS Pesticides	Information
Fludioxonil	Persistent and Toxic - Endocrine disruptor
Metalaxyl	Persistent and Toxic, Could receive unlimited approval under the omnibus proposal
Tebuconazole	Persistent and Toxic

Table 4. CfS pesticides detected in dust samples

5. Bee-toxic pesticides

On average five (5) pesticide substances known to be highly toxic to bees were found in the tested samples, confirming that bee-killing pesticides are still massively used, either as agricultural pesticides or as biocides.

Substance	Information
Acetamiprid	Neonicotinoid - High chronic toxicity to wild bees in particular
Captan	High toxicity to bees (EFSA)
Chlorpyrifos-ethyl	Banned - High toxicity to bees (EFSA)
Deltamethrin	High toxicity to bees (EFSA)
Fipronil	High toxicity to bees (EFSA) - Banned as pesticide but still approved as veterinary medicine
Imidacloprid	High toxicity to bees (EFSA) - Banned as pesticide but still approved as veterinary medicine
Permethrin	High toxicity to bees - Banned as pesticide but still approved as veterinary medicine
Piperonyl-butoxide	Synergist that prevents insecticide detoxification and strongly potentiates insecticides' toxicity.

Table 5: Bee-toxic pesticides found in dust samples

Discussion

The results of this small scale study highlight daily exposure to cocktails of toxic pesticides and biocides. The number of samples is low, but the results are in line with previous research, both in the region[14] and in other areas of intensive agriculture[15]. Furthermore, scientific research carried out in the area of Bari links exposure to pesticides with DNA damage in farmworkers[16] and with lymphoma[17].

In the EU, pesticides and biocides are currently risk assessed in silo, and the chronic exposure to cocktails of pesticides is not taken into account in the regulatory process. While the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has carried out limited work in terms of exposure to cocktails in food, chronic exposure to pesticide residues via dust is currently disregarded by regulators.

The identified pesticides are among the most toxic pesticides approved in the EU. This demonstrates that farmers heavily rely on the most toxic substances instead of transitioning towards available less toxic alternatives. This underlines the urgent need for a training of farmers in implementing less harmful practices, such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM), giving priority to alternative crop protection approaches, in line with Member States' legal obligations[18]. It also underlines the importance of setting large non-sprayed buffer zones close to citizens' houses, in line with EU law[19].

Worryingly, four identified pesticides are officially categorised as endocrine disruptors by the EU. According to EU law, citizens cannot be exposed to pesticidal EDs. Indeed, EDs impact human hormones at very low doses. They favour cancers or infertility, they can also impact brain development. Since 2024, the EFSA has identified 9 ED pesticides which are still not banned, as the European Commission drags its feet to comply with the legislation and ban them to protect citizens' health.

This study also alerts on the omnipresence of neurotoxicants in our environment. Scientific research has shown that exposure to neurotoxic pesticides during pregnancy or at early life stages can reduce children's cognitive capacities and IQ. It also increases depression among teenagers. Finally, chronic exposure to pesticides favours Parkinson's disease, which is recognized as a farmer occupational disease in France, Germany and Italy.

No less than 8 identified substances are also toxic to bees, and other insects. Several of them are banned for agricultural use but still approved as biocides or veterinary medicines and massively disseminated into the environment. In the frame of the One Health approach, those should also be phased out as biocides and veterinary products to protect biodiversity, and take into account the growing body of scientific evidence that they might cause harm to human brain development.

While there is mounting scientific evidence demonstrating that chronic exposure to pesticides favours a series of chronic illnesses, this small study highlights the level of contamination of households from Bari and Felthurns. Nonetheless, the Members of the European Parliament representing the communities of South Tyrol and Puglia are acting in the interest of the pesticide industry and pesticide-intensive farming. In the annex from their report, MEPs Dorfmann and Picaro highlighted that they **met only with intensive farming unions and the pesticides industry.**

This pro-pesticides behaviour is all the more paradoxical, since **voters of EPP and ECR parties in Italy are strongly opposed to pesticide deregulation**. Indeed, while Mr Dorfman and Mr Picaro very actively try to deregulate pesticides in Europe, which will worsen citizens exposure, a recent YouGov poll carried out in 7 EU countries, including Italy, highlighted how little support there is among the general public to

14 Cech et al. 2023, Linhart et al. 2021
15 https://www.pan-europe.info/press-releases/2026/10/school-alarm-cocktails-36-pesticides-found-flemish-classrooms https://www.generations-futures.fr/actualites/analyses-poussiere/
16 Intranuovo et al. (2018)
17 Ferri et al. (2017)
18 Art. 14 from the Directive on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (SUD) 2009/128/EC.
19 Art. 12 from the Directive on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (SUD) 2009/128/EC.

this Pesticide Omnibus proposal. This heavily questions their intentions and the influence of the pesticides industry or other major financial interests on their political behaviour. **In Italy, 76% of the population is asking to phase out the use of synthetic pesticides, while only 2% of the population asks to extend their use.** In the supporters of Mr Picaro's party (Fratelli d'Italia), it is even **77% of the voters that ask to phase out pesticides, while only 6% of their support time-unlimited approvals of pesticides**, as promoted by Mr. Picaro. A similar rejection of pesticides was observed for ECR, the EU party Fratelli d'Italia is a member of, across the 7 surveyed countries. Regarding Mr Dorfmann, the YouGov poll does not provide specific details on the voters in South Tyrol but **in the European People's Party (EPP) he represents, only 5% of their supporters favour a time-unlimited approval of pesticides, as he is supporting, while 71% of their voters support a phasing out of pesticides**. These figures are consistent across the members of EPP in the 7 surveyed countries. The results of this YouGov poll are in line with a previous comparable Ipsos poll[20], carried out in 2023, where a vast majority of Europeans expressed their concern on the impact of pesticides on health and the environment, while asking to phase them out.

While many alternatives to pesticides already exist[21]; while many farmers, including in Italy, already decided to transition towards low-input agriculture; while scientific research shows that pesticide-free agriculture is profitable; while scientific research shows that farmers and their families are the first victims of the pesticide system, it is all the more incomprehensible that the representatives of South Tyrolean and Apulian heavily exposed communities support such a strong deregulation of pesticide in the EU. Their approach will inevitably harm even more the community they are supposed to protect, as well as the quality of their water, and their environment.

Conclusions and recommendations

This report aimed at highlighting the discrepancy between the risks faced by citizens, and the behaviour of their representatives in the European Parliament. **The position of these MEPs to deregulate pesticides even more than what the European Commission proposed is the more incomprehensible, considering that 6% or less of their own voters are in favour of the initial Commission Omnibus proposal.**

PAN Europe, Greenpeace Italy and Friends of the Earth Europe ask Members of the European Parliament to come to their senses, listen to the will of citizens and protect them from pesticides, instead of promoting a chemical-intensive agriculture that contributes to the development of chronic diseases such as cancer, Parkinson's or infertility. We ask MEPs to:

- Reject the Food and Feed Safety Omnibus regulation proposal from the European Commission
- Send a letter to the European Commission, asking to table a new proposal that takes into account the need to:
    - Develop a Masterplan to shift EU agriculture from a chemical-intensive model towards low-input farming, based on scientific knowledge and innovation, by implementing agroecological pesticide-free practices.
    - Improve pesticide regulatory procedures by ensuring a better implementation of the EU pesticide legislation (hiring of sufficient staff, rejecting low quality industry dossiers submitted during the application for placing their products on the market)

20 IPSOS poll report (2023), carried out in France, Germany, Denmark, Poland, Romania and Spain
21 https://friendsoftheearth.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/PAN-FRI-25-pesticide-alternatives-WEB.pdf

- Speed up the phasing out of harmful pesticides, such as endocrine disrupting or neurotoxic pesticides, in line with the law
- Speed up the availability of biocontrol products by ensuring a fast-track procedure carried out at EU-level by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)
- Accompany and support farmers in the uptake of pesticide-free practices, and the transition towards low-input farming through dedicated independent advisory systems and financial support, in line with the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUD, dir. 2009/128/EC) and the CAP
- Ensure a proper protection of citizens' health, water and biodiversity through the setting of mandatory buffer zones close to residential areas, water catchment areas, and Natura 2000 areas, in line with the SUD.
- Monitor closely pesticide exposure of farmers and farmworkers as well as people living in agricultural areas, and assess the impact on their health
- Make the "One Health" approach a reality, not just a slogan: substances banned as pesticides are still approved as biocides or veterinary medicines, putting citizens' health and the environment at risk.

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