POLLINIS
STOP POLLINATOR EXTINCTION

Food and Feed Safety Omnibus: An Unprecedented Attempt to Deregulate Pesticides in Europe

Summary

Background

In 2025, the European Commission launched a series of so-called “omnibus” proposals aimed at simplifying European regulations in order to strengthen business competitivlegislativeeness, in line with the recommendations of the Draghi report (2024).

In particular, the Feed and Food Safety "omnibus" proposal introduces substantial amendments to Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009, which governs the authorisation and placing on the market of pesticides in the European Union.

This text raises serious concerns and has caused division even within the European Commission. Several Commissioners have expressed their reservations and civil society has quickly mobilised. The legislative process is expected to continue in 2026 in the Council and the European Parliament.

The text’s aims appear at odds with the following:

- The objectives of the Green Deal and the “Farm to Fork” strategy, both of which aim to reduce pesticide use and associated risks by 2030;
- The current scientific consensus on the impacts of pesticides, whose causal link with the massive collapse of biodiversity and human health problems is now well-established;
- The growing demand from citizens for stronger protections of the environment and human health;
- Several recent developments in case law highlighting the importance of the precautionary principle. In its current form, the bill is open to challenge before the CJEU.

Measures that are of particular concern to us:

The draft regulation introduces numerous structural changes that are likely to significantly reduce levels of health and environmental protections for Europeans. In our view, this move constitutes a massive deregulation of pesticides.

1. **Restrictions on the inclusion of new scientific knowledge:** The text aims to limit the ability of national health agencies to use recent scientific data when assessing plant protection products. This provision would artificially (but bindingly) define the “state of scientific knowledge” as that existing at the time of the initial authorisation of an active substance.

2. **No more periodic reassessments of authorised active substances:** The elimination of the principle of regular review would constitute a major change. It could lead to unlimited approval for a large number of substances, reducing the scope for market removal in the event of new evidence of toxicity. Furthermore, it would shift the burden of proof to the detriment of public institutions and independent research.

3. **Broadening exemptions to include particularly harmful substances:** Expanding the scope for derogations under Article 4(7) would allow the temporary authorisation, on socio-economic grounds, of substances that are potentially reprotoxic or endocrine-disrupting.

4. **Extension of grace periods for banned pesticides:** doubling the timeframes permitting the sale and use of pesticides that have been withdrawn from the market would prolong the exposure of populations and ecosystems to substances recognised as problematic.

5. **Less stringent authorisation procedures:** extensions for minor uses and mutual recognition could become legal loopholes for bypassing regulations, thereby limiting Member States' ability to oppose certain authorisations.

6. **Overly broad definition of biocontrol:** the introduction of a new category, biocontrol substances, based on the nature of substances rather than their level of risk, would introduce inconsistencies into the European pesticides framework. The fast-track procedures designed for this category would allow synthetic products or those derived from new biotechnologies – whose effects are not yet sufficiently understood – to be placed on the market without the necessary checks.

The problems of delays and uncertainties in assessment procedures must be addressed, but there are solutions that do not weaken the regulatory framework.

<u>The following are among the priority measures we propose to streamline procedures:</u>

1. **Increase the EFSA's human and financial resources** (approximately 50 FTEs required, or two per Member State). For national agencies, Member States must ensure that the fees levied are commensurate with the actual costs of assessments.

2. **Require manufacturers to submit complete applications** before the assessment process begins, to avoid the current back-and-forth exchanges that are clogging up departments (particularly regarding renewal applications) and slowing down the processing of applications.

3. **Stop the evaluation of a substance as soon as toxicity is established** (cut-off criteria). Currently, all substances undergo a full evaluation.

4. **Update the mandatory assessment protocols** to incorporate internationally agreed standards (OECD guidelines) and thus **ensure consistent rules across health agencies**, based on the most up-to-date scientific knowledge.

5. **Improve the transparency** of European decisions, particularly within the **SCoPAFF**, which has the power to suspend procedures (clock stop) without justification.

6. **Broaden the scope of entities eligible to request the reassessment** of an active substance, beyond Member States.

7. **Support the agricultural transition** by funding independent research and reforming agricultural policy.

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Summary

In 2025, the European Commission launched a series of so-called “omnibus” legislative proposals aimed at simplifying European regulations in order to boost business competitiveness.

Far from merely simplifying regulations, the Food Safety Omnibus text introduces substantial changes to the European regulations governing the commercialisation of pesticides in the European Union. If adopted in its current form, it would lead to a widespread weakening of the regulatory framework – a framework whose existing provisions are already inadequate regarding the protection of pollinators and human health.

The text was first presented in December 2025, and its legislative process is expected to continue throughout 2026 in the EU Council and the European Parliament.

In this analysis, POLLINIS details the provisions it considers most concerning and puts forward its own recommendations for improving the procedures for pesticide evaluation and market authorization.

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A text causing division within the Commission

In 2025, the European Commission sought to revise numerous existing EU laws by introducing a package of 10 so-called omnibus laws. This move followed the publication of the Draghi Report[1], which, in 2024, recommended measures to boost the competitiveness of businesses in the EU single market, including the simplification of regulations to encourage innovation.

The tenth text, known as the Food and Feed Safety Simplification Package, introduces far-reaching changes to Regulation (EC) No. 1107/2009 governing the **placing of pesticides on the market in Europe**. Under the guise of simplification, this Omnibus text paves the way for **significant weakening of environmental and health protections and undermines the essential role of independent science**, to the detriment of biodiversity and the health of European citizens.

POLLINIS raised this warning as early as October 2025 in its response to the preliminary call for contributions on the subject, and its concerns have since been echoed by numerous civil society organisations. Indeed, two draft versions of the text were leaked in November and December 2025, clarifying the European Commission's intentions regarding its desire to **weaken the protections guaranteed by the current legislative framework**. In response, civil society organisations immediately took action. POLLINIS promptly launched a petition[2] denouncing significant setbacks and calling on the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of the EU to withdraw the proposal. This petition quickly gained over a hundred thousand signatures. A number of European Commissioners —Jessica Roswall, Commissioner for the Environment, and Teresa Ribera, Vice-President of the Commission responsible for a Just, Clean, and Competitive Transition — also voiced strong criticism of specific measures in the text, exposing divisions within the Commission itself. Nevertheless, the submission of the text[3] was announced by the European Commissioner for Animal Health and Welfare, Olivér Várhelyi, on December 16, 2025.

The Council of the EU, comprising the Member States, and the European Parliament must now reach a decision on the text. Given the duration of negotiations surrounding previous omnibus packages and the opposition expressed within the main European institutions, it is likely that the review process will continue well through 2026.

[1] European Commission, The future of European competitiveness Part A | A competitiveness strategy for Europe, September 2024
[2] POLLINIS, No to pesticide deregulation! Petition to the French government, the European Commission, and MEPs to stop the deregulation of pesticides. Petition, December 2023
[3] European Commission,, Proposal - Food and Feed Safety Simplification Package, December 2025.

Pesticide regulations deemed too effective from the industry's perspective

Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 governing the placing of pesticides on the market in Europe took effect in 2011. It has since been evaluated by the European Parliament in 2019[4] and by the European Commission in 2020[5]. In a more accommodating stance than that of the Parliament, **the Commission at the time deemed the regulation to be generally effective** in protecting health and the environment, thanks to the stringency of its authorisation criteria and the regular approval reassessment for all active substances. **Nevertheless, both evaluation reports included recommendations** aimed at improving the implementation of the regulation, recognising in particular a chronic delay in the evaluation and authorisation procedures, linked to various factors which we address in the final section of this document.

Biodiversity collapse is a reality: between 1989 and 2016 alone, **the flying insect population declined by 75%** in Germany. And the current regulation, whilst certainly more stringent than its predecessors, has failed to reverse the trend: in the fifteen years since it took effect, insect populations have declined by nearly 60% in the UK[6], and bird populations have fallen by roughly 30% in European agricultural areas, with the intensive use of pesticides and fertilisers as the dominant factor driving this phenomenon[7]. Meanwhile, there is a growing body of scientific research demonstrating **the links between currently authorised pesticides and human illnesses**[8].

It is clear that the current framework for pesticide evaluation and authorisation is grossly inadequate in its capacity to ensure the protection of biodiversity and the health of Europeans.

It is therefore paradoxical, to say the least, that the European Commission, just a few years after reaching its conclusions, should propose a new text designed to weaken the existing framework.

Among the measures proposed by this Omnibus, the following give rise to particular concern:

- The **deliberate restriction on the inclusion of new scientific knowledge** by national health agencies in the examination of authorisation applications for the placing of pesticides on the market;

- The **scrapping of periodic reassessments** – which thus far have been carried out largely by manufacturers — of authorised active substances. This measure will effectively shift the burden of toxicity testing onto public and independent research

[4] *ibid.*
[5] REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL - Evaluation of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 on the placing of plant protection products on the market and of Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 on maximum residue levels of pesticides, 2020.
[6] Lawrence Ball et al., Technical Report, Kent Wildlife Trust and Buglife, May 2022.
[7] Rigal, S et al. Farmland practices are driving bird populations decline across Europe, PNAS, May 2023.
[8] Leenhardt et al. (2022) The impacts of plant protection products on biodiversity and ecosystem services, Summary of the report of ESCo, INRAE - Ifremer (France), 136 pages.
Et Inserm. Pesticides and health: new data. Collective Expertise Collection. Montrouge : EDP Sciences, 2021.

and severely restrict the ability to ban substances, even if evidence is produced showing toxicity levels exceeding established thresholds;

- An **increased concentration of decision-making power in the hands of the European Commission** at several stages of the assessment and authorisation processes, which severely undermines the subsidiarity principle and the freedom of Member States to protect their biodiversity and the health of their citizens;

- The formalisation of an **overly broad definition of biocontrol**, paving the way for fast-track authorisation procedures for synthetic substances whose effects are still largely unknown.

Through its proposal, the Commission claims to reduce the “administrative burden” and associated costs for Member States and businesses, while facilitating farmers’ access to pesticides and upholding current levels of protection for the environment and human health. However, it acknowledges that **it has not carried out an impact assessment** to verify this last point[9], and our analysis of the proposal’s impact is markedly different.

In reality, **the Food Safety Omnibus bill undermines the primary objective of the European Pesticides Regulation**: to ensure a high standard of protection for human health and the environment. As it stands, **the bill is open to challenge before the Court of Justice of the European Union** (CJEU), as it contravenes the EU’s founding principles, including the precautionary principle and the principle of proportionality[10]. Two Court decisions handed down in recent years could provide grounds for an appeal: first, the 2019 Blaise judgment[11], which requires the European legislator to strictly apply the precautionary principle and to rely on the most recent scientific data when making decisions on pesticide authorization; and this ruling was confirmed by the 2024 PAN Europe judgment[12], which holds that Member States must base their risk assessments on the current state of scientific and technical knowledge, without limiting themselves solely to the available guidance documents. The European Ombudsman, for her part, has launched an investigation into the European Commission’s "omnibus method", after deeming admissible a complaint concerning Omnibus 1 and receiving other alerts[13].

Instead of accelerating the transition to sustainable agriculture, the Commission’s proposal **increases the EU’s dependence on chemical products** and traps Europe in a pesticide-based agricultural model, jeopardising the resilience of agricultural systems and long-term food security.

This proposal seems all the more **inconsistent as it deviates from a clear policy direction set out in the European Green Deal** and the “Farm to Fork” strategy, according

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[9] Klaus Berend, Director for Food Safety, Sustainability and Innovation in the European Commission’s Directorate-General Health and Food Safety, himself stated during a hearing before the Dutch Parliament on 26 March 2026 that the Commission was unable to predict the impact of this reform on health and the environment prior to its implementation. Source: video of the hearing via this link.

[10] GEULEN & KLINGER Rechtsanwälte, Legal Opinion on The Lawfulness of the Planned Amendments through the "Food and Feed Safety Omnibus“, 20 January 2026.

[11] CJEU, 1 October 2019, Blaise et al., No C-616/17, ECLI:EU:C:2019:800

[12] CJEU, 25 April 2024, PAN Europe, No C-308/22

[13] Générations futures, Omnibus 6 on Chemical Products: as the battle in the European Parliament begins, our NGOs are taking the matter to the EU Ombudsman against this legislation, 12 March 2026

to which the EU must reduce its dependence on pesticides, their use and their associated risks by 2030.

Finally, this move **runs counter to long-standing calls from citizens**[14] for more stringent pesticide regulations and the phasing out of synthetic pesticides, as evidenced in France by the widespread public outcry against the Duplomb laws[15]. Citizens have been supported by the **scientific community**[16], which is calling for political decisions to be aligned with the scientific evidence available today.

There is thus a clear contradiction between, on the one hand, scientific evidence pointing to significant risks to biodiversity and health; legal frameworks; public demand; and previously defined strategic objectives; and, on the other hand, decisions that are essentially aimed at reducing costs for economic stakeholders and certain sectors of public policy. While these developments can be explained in part by new political dynamics, they also coincide with an **intensification of lobbying efforts by economic stakeholders who stand to benefit most from a weakening of pesticide regulations**.

In 2025, the pesticide manufacturer lobby CropLife met with the cabinets of various European Commissioners on 18 occasions — more than in the previous five years combined. Meanwhile, the agrochemical giant Bayer-Monsanto secured 34 meetings in that year alone[17]. European industry stakeholders have also launched a major pro-business lobbying campaign targeting the European Union via the “Antwerp Declaration”[18]. Their representatives were promptly received by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, **whereas NGOs that had launched a parallel initiative saw their request rejected**[19].

Deregulation at all levels, from the most dangerous to the most recent pesticides

- **Deliberate restriction on the ability to take new scientific knowledge into account**

Alongside the scrapping of periodic reassessments (see below), this measure aims to freeze "*the current state of scientific knowledge*" on which Member States’ health agencies base their decision on whether or not to authorise a plant protection product containing an active substance already authorised at the European level[20]. Given that several years can elapse between the authorisation of an active substance at the European level and the review of the plant protection product containing that substance — or even decades if a substance’s authorisation becomes indefinite — this measure would amount to artificially curbing the

[14] PAN Europe, Pesticides: Play it safe!, 2023
[15] Pan Europe, Historic: 1 million signatures in France against the “Loi Duplomb”, 22 July 2025.
[16] Le Monde, Agriculture: “We, doctors and scientists, warn of the growing disconnect between the state of science and the law-making process”, 10 February 2026.
[17] Transparency International EU, data for 2025 and 2019-2024.
[18] Contexte, In Antwerp, industry giants are taking control of the European agenda, 12 February 2026.
[19] Contexte, Environment Briefing, 18 March 2026.
[20] “Current scientific and technical knowledge”, modification of Article 36, page 54 of the Omnibus bill.

consideration of new scientific data by the national bodies responsible for assessing a pesticide's toxicity.

This is a Kafkaesque situation for scientists, the environment and citizens, but an effective shield for companies, allowing them to continue selling their products despite advances in scientific knowledge. The measure also severely undermines the principle of subsidiarity and the freedom of Member States to protect their biodiversity and the health of their citizens, as it amounts to removing one of the key criteria that currently allow a national health agency to refuse authorisation for a plant protection product containing an active substance authorised at EU level.

- **The scrapping of periodic reassessments of authorised active substances**

Currently, an active substance is granted an initial authorisation for a maximum of 10 years, and up to 15 years for a renewal. At the end of each assessment period, the manufacturer must carry out new evaluations and provide evidence that the substance complies with existing standards. This documentation then undergoes the standard verification and authorisation process by the European authorities. The process ensures that scientific advances made during the intervening period are taken into account and that the most harmful substances are withdrawn from the market where necessary. Scrapping these periodic reassessments will remove an effective and essential safeguard for ensuring that scientific advances are regularly taken into account. Without this safeguard, the costly work of assessment will effectively be shifted onto public and independent research institutions, whose budgets are significantly lower than those of private entities.

Three types of active substances, however, would not be eligible for unlimited authorisations:

- substances classified as 'candidates for substitution'. This category indicates that substitution is deemed necessary in the short term due to a substance's proven harmfulness, but that such a substitution has not yet been implemented (approximately 10% of currently authorised substances);

- substances approved in accordance with Article 4(7) of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009, which are also considered particularly harmful as they do not meet the usual authorisation criteria – non-carcinogenic, non-reprotoxic, and non-endocrine-disrupting to humans or non-target organisms (no such substances to date);

- and substances presenting "*uncertainties emerging from the risk assessment, including as a result of data gaps*". This wording was included in the latest version of the Omnibus regulation in response to criticism of the measure, but its vagueness would allow the Commission to include or exclude substances from this category as it sees fit. To date, neither the Commission nor the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) has been able to respond to requests for clarification from civil society on this matter.

As a result, **at least 49 synthetic substances** (out of the 421 currently approved) **could be granted unlimited authorisation once the Omnibus bill is adopted**[21], including several

[21] Générations Futures, Press release, 5 February 2026.

highly controversial ones such as acetamiprid and glyphosate. Of the remaining 372, 226 would be categorised depending on the outcome of their ongoing renewal procedures.

The European Commission argues that it could restart evaluations at any time if alerted by a Member State. Currently, Article 21 of Regulation 1107/2009 states that the Commission "*may review the approval of an active substance at any time" and that it "shall take into account*" any requests from Member States in doing so. To date, only fifteen substances have been subject to a review following a report submitted in this way[22]. The Omnibus, meanwhile, introduces Articles 18 and 18a. The former compels the European Commission to carry out reviews of substances with unlimited approval – "*it shall take into account, among others, indications of safety concerns for human or animal health or the environment, new scientific or technical knowledge and available monitoring data and may take into account requests from Member States*" – but the criteria and timetable are not specified. The second article merely provides the Commission with the option (but not an obligation) to initiate a targeted review of active substances with unlimited approval.

At this stage, therefore, **the Commission's reassessment obligations appear to be weak**. The Member State's filtering role is particularly significant given the influence of pesticide lobbyists within Member States. At present, it is difficult to envision how a scientific consensus on a substance's non-compliance could lead to its withdrawal from the market.

The case of **flupyradifurone** illustrates this phenomenon perfectly: when the insecticide was assessed by the EFSA in 2015, no independent scientific studies were available and the assessments provided by Bayer concluded that the substance presented low toxicity to honeybees. Since then, more than 70 published studies have demonstrated high toxicity to solitary bees. Upon notification by the Netherlands and France regarding new studies, the EFSA published an updated statement in 2022. The European Commission then initiated a review procedure for the substance under Article 21 of the Regulation, but it is still dragging its feet today in mandating the EFSA to conduct a full review. Meanwhile, flupyradifurone remains authorised in Europe but not in France (pursuant to the decree of 16 December 2020 banning the use of three neonicotinoid substances, including flupyradifurone), leaving French farmers exposed to unfair competition[23].

It should also be noted that, over the last twenty years, the EFSA has drawn up **two new sets of active substance evaluation guidelines designed to better account for risks to bees** (the Bee Guidance 2013[24] and the Bee Guidance 2023[25]); these documents have remained **stalled at the PAFF Committee**[26], a body characterised by its lack of transparency and tasked with assisting the European Commission in its decision-making on authorising the placement of pesticides on the market. As a result, ANSES (the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety) continues to base the bulk of its decisions on the authorisation of pesticide market placement on obsolete or

[22] Générations Futures, Press kit, 20 March 2026.
[23] Générations Futures, Flupyradifurone substance fact sheet.
[24] EFSA, Guidance Document on the risk assessment of plant protection products on bees (*Apis mellifera, Bombus* spp. and solitary bees). *EFSA Journal* 2013; 11(7):3295, 268 pp.
[25] EFSA, Adriaanse P, Arce A, Focks A, Ingels B, Jölli D, Lambin S, Rundlöf M, Süßenbach D, Del Aguila M, Ercolano V, Ferilli F, Ippolito A, Szentes Cs, Neri FM, Padovani L, Rortais A, Wassenberg J and Auteri D, 2023. Revised guidance on the risk assessment of plant protection products on bees (Apis mellifera, Bombus spp. and solitary bees). EFSA Journal 2023;21(5):7989, 133 pp.
[26] Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed

inadequate protocols drawn up in 2002[27], all while applying certain recommendations from the new guidance documents, in the absence of harmonisation at the European level.

- **Derogations under Article 4(7) for substances that are reprotoxic or endocrine disruptors to humans or non-target organisms**

According to the European Commission, this previously unenforced article is intended for more regular use thanks to "clarifications" introduced by the Omnibus bill. It permits the **authorisation of an active substance for five years** if the Commission deems it "*necessary to control a serious danger to plant health or plant production which cannot be contained by other reasonable means including non-chemical methods*", **even if the substance is classified during its evaluation as reprotoxic or an endocrine disruptor** – criteria that would otherwise automatically preclude the authorisation of the active substance[28]. Member States may then authorise a plant protection product containing this substance for periods of 120 days, provided they submit a phase-out plan to the Commission - an obligation that would simply cease to exist under the Omnibus.

The current wording of recital (16) of the Omnibus **would broaden the conditions for authorisation to include cases where the available alternatives do not represent "*comparable costs, availability and efficacy*"**, thereby risking an increase in the number of cases where a derogation would be possible. Indeed, some Member States are seeking to introduce these socio-economic considerations into all active substance authorisation decisions (Estonia, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Romania)[29].

In our view, no derogation should be granted for substances recognised as hazardous and meeting the exclusion criteria of the regulation. The protection of health and the environment must always take precedence over "plant production".

- **The doubling of grace periods for banned pesticides**

In the event of the withdrawal of a plant protection product's authorisation, grace periods would be doubled to allow for the sale and distribution of the product for a period of one year, and the storage, use and disposal of existing stocks for a period of two years, **even if the product poses a concern for human or animal health or the environment[30]**. In its final version, the Commission has included a minor exception to this regulatory change, provided the concern is "*immediate and serious*", a vague characterisation that is likely to be of little practical use. The European Commission thus aims to grant even more time for the use of pesticides deemed harmful to health and biodiversity, in full knowledge of the facts.

[27] SANCO/10329/2002 rev.2 final and 2010 EPPO on bees.
[28] Substances recognised as known carcinogens (1A), presumed carcinogens without a threshold (1B), and known reproductive toxins (1A) are excluded from the possibility of derogation via Article 4(7) in the current regulation. The Omnibus bill would add to these criteria mutagens in categories 1A and 1B, persistent organic pollutants (POPs), substances that are persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic (PBTs), and very persistent and very bioaccumulative substances (vPvBs), but not endocrine disruptors or reprotoxic substances in categories 1B or 2.
[29] ST-6470-2026-INIT
[30] Modification to Article 20 (2), page 49 of the Omnibus bill.

- **The ability to authorise a pesticide for a period of one year after the expiry of its active substance's authorisation**

The evaluation and authorisation system for active substances faces chronic delays, and the European Commission is seeking by all means to smooth over the resulting problems caused to manufacturers and users – **even at the risk of adverse effects on human and environmental health**. This new provision, introduced by the Omnibus, would only reinforce this trend.

At present, Article 17 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 already allows the Commission to grant an exceptional approval extension for an active substance where the renewal procedure could not be completed before the expiry of the approval "*for reasons beyond the applicant's control*". Since the Regulation came into force, the Commission has made extensive use of this Article – to the point of completely distorting its purpose – as a means to mitigate delays in the evaluation and authorisation procedures, regardless of the causes of those delays. Indeed, in 2020, the European Parliament criticised the excessive number of "exceptional" extensions granted – for several years running – without so much as examining whether the delay was due to reasons beyond the applicant's control. In 2023, POLLINIS identified 119 active substances for which administrative extensions had been granted (more than a quarter of the active substances authorised in the EU at that time). Since 2011, **35 substances that were ultimately banned due to their toxicity had been granted extensions of up to seven years**[31].

[31] POLLINIS, Pesticides : EU'S System of Endless Extensions Threatens Biodiversity and Human Health, April 2023.

Boscalid, an SDHI fungicide that is highly harmful to pollinators, serves as a perfect illustration of the dangers of the pesticide approval extension system. First authorised for commercial use in 2008, it has been granted seven extensions since 2018, totalling 10 years of approval extensions without following the standard renewal procedure. In 2023, POLLINIS revealed that EFSA had made 122 requests for further information in the re-evaluation process, to which BASF responded by submitting some 200 new documents and studies concerning five areas of key importance for the substance's risk assessment. The Commission did not seek to verify whether the delay in the procedure could be attributed, even partially, to BASF.

And yet, **the responsibility of manufacturers in procedural delays is systematically identified upon analysis of the causes of such delays**, whether by the European Commission, the European Parliament, EFSA or ANSES in France, particularly regarding procedures for the renewal of substance approvals where there are doubts as to whether the substances can meet the assessment criteria[32].

On 19 November 2025, **the General Court of the European Union ruled in favour of POLLINIS's appeal against the European Commission, which had refused to re-evaluate boscalid** despite granting it an additional extension[33]. This decision served as a reminder to the European Commission that such extensions must not be granted automatically.

In light of this example, the ability to continue approving a pesticide at the national level for a year beyond the active ingredient's expiry date **raises concerns that the regulations will be circumvented once again**. Grace periods already exist to grant extensions for substances whose authorisation has expired or been withdrawn. **The proposed measure is a false solution to the problem of delays in the evaluation and authorisation processes**.

- **Expanding the scope for simplified procedures: minor use extensions and mutual recognition**

A minor use authorisation may be granted for a plant protection product in a Member State if it is applied to plants that "*are not widely grown in that Member State; or are widely grown, to meet an exceptional need for plant protection*". **Such a broad definition can cover very different situations and opens the door to misuse**. The Omnibus bill would require Member States to grant an approval extension if the product is already used in another Member State, even in the absence of "*public interest*" (as is currently the case). The bill would also remove the applicant's requirement to provide necessary documentation,

[32] REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL - Evaluation of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 on the placing of plant protection products on the market and of Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 on maximum residue levels of pesticides, 2020,
European Parliament, European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2019 on the Union's authorisation procedure for pesticides (2018/2153(INI)),
EFSA's "Improving the Speed of Risk Assessment" diagnostic (2025).
[33] CJEU, 19 November 2025, Pollinis France v. European Commission, T-94/23, ECLI:EU:T:2025:1036

including data on the exposure of workers, passers-by and local residents. The only beneficial proposal is that lists of minor uses would be made public by Member States.

Mutual recognition facilitates the approval of a plant protection product if it is already authorised in another Member State for the same use and comparable agricultural practices. **The Omnibus widens the scope of cases where mutual recognition may be requested,** and facilitates applications for mutual recognition by official or scientific bodies and professional agricultural organisations by **limiting documentation and assessment requirements.** However, it does specify that the product must indeed be commercially available in the relevant Member State to enable mutual recognition procedures. The aim here is to prevent manufacturers from prioritising Member States where fees are lowest when applying for initial authorisation, and then simply relying on mutual recognition in other Member States where fees are higher.

Lastly, the proposal gives the European Commission the power to adopt detailed implementing rules via an Implementing Regulation for minor uses and mutual recognition. The nature of these rules remains undetermined.

- **The institutionalisation of an overly broad definition of biocontrol products and the granting of simplified approval procedures: a combination that undermines the current risk-based approach**

Over the past few decades, the concept of biocontrol has been the subject of debate surrounding its definition. Originally referring to a wide range of agro-ecological methods, the term has now shifted, largely due to the influence of industry players, towards a more restrictive definition of products presented as less hazardous than chemical pesticides (it is often said that they have a ‘better toxicological profile’).

This approach overlooks tried-and-tested methods, such as prevention or conservation-based pest control, and traps us in a product-centric framework. Furthermore, **it lumps together numerous substances of very different natures, attributing to them an unfounded claim of naturalness that purports to systematically reduce risk**. But we must not confuse a product’s “naturalness”[34], “better toxicological profile” and “safety”. The definition of biocontrol proposed by the omnibus bill is no exception to this trend.

Currently, Regulation (EC) 1107/2009 establishes a number of categories of pesticides based on a risk-based classification. Following their evaluation, substances are classified into one of the following categories, presented here schematically from the least risky to the most risky:

- basic substances
- low-risk substances
- substances we shall refer to as “conventional” (namely all substances not falling under the other four categories)
- substances that are candidates for substitution
- substances that are banned but benefit from a derogation under Article 4(7)

[34] Azadirachtin is an example of a natural active substance, extracted from neem oil, which can be highly toxic to pollinators and aquatic organisms.

Each category is subject to restrictions or concessions governing the approval process, depending on its risk profile. **The Omnibus introduces a new category of substances based not on risk, but on the nature of the molecule**, and grants it concessions during the evaluation and approval process. This change introduces both inconsistency into the regulation and **a high risk of undermining the European principles that underpin the entire pesticides framework**.

The wisest course of action would be to refrain from including a definition of biocontrol in this text. At the very least, this definition should be distinguished from the other categories, which are risk-based and directly aligned with the regulation's purpose. **Biocontrol substances should undergo the same evaluation process as other substances and should be classified, based on the risk level established by that process, into one of the existing categories, without any specific provisions or derogations**.

If biocontrol substances are intended to derive solely from nature or to be strictly identical to what is found in nature, then the definition currently proposed by the Omnibus bill is too broad, as it includes synthetic substances that may differ greatly from what is found in nature.

In its current form, the definition of biocontrol substances as it appears in the Food and Feed Safety Omnibus bill is as follows:

> *'biocontrol substance' means:*
> *a) micro-organisms,*
> *b) inorganic substances as occurring in nature, with the exception of heavy metals and their salts or*
> *(c) substances of biological origin or produced synthetically that are functionally identical and structurally similar to them.*

This definition is relatively similar to the French definition of biocontrol products[35]. But while the French definition stipulates that the substances in question must be "strictly identical to a natural substance", the definition in the Omnibus stipulates that the substances need only be "functionally identical and structurally similar". The words "strictly identical" in the French definition are essential, as they exclude from this definition synthetic substances or biotechnological products that are merely *similar* – modelled on living organisms – rather than copying them *identically*.

The omnibus definition would thus allow for the inclusion of **pyrethroids**, such as deltamethrin, in the biocontrol category; these are synthetic substances modelled on pyrethrins – natural compounds produced by plants – whose structure they replicate whilst modifying it, and which pose serious problems for pollinating insects, including bees[36]. Similarly, new biotechnology products such as **RNA interference pesticides**, whose active substance is a biochemical molecule, could likewise be included despite not being identical

[35] This definition is set out in Article L253-6 of the Rural and Maritime Fisheries Code and clarified by Decree No. 2022-35 of 17 January 2022, which stipulates the conditions for inclusion on the lists of biocontrol products.
[36] Liu Q, He Q, Zhang S, Chai Y, Gao Q, Xiao J, Fang Q, Yu L, Cao H. Toxic effects of detected pyrethroid pesticides on honeybee (Apis mellifera ligustica Spin and Apis cerana cerana Fabricius). Sci Rep. 2022 Oct 6;12(1):16695. doi: 10.1038/s41598-022-20925-x.
Mackei M, Kámán-Tóth E, Mátis G, Neogrády Z, Fébel H, Huber F. Sublethal deltamethrin exposure dysregulates brain fatty acid homeostasis in honey bee (Apis mellifera). Environ Pollut. 2026 Jun 15;399:128204. doi: 10.1016/j.envpol.2026.128204.

to active substances naturally produced by a living organism – while these new pesticides raise serious questions about their impact on the environment and human health[37].

The definition of biocontrol must therefore, at the very least, be narrowed and explicitly exclude biotechnology products.

Furthermore, **the Omnibus bill introduces an unacceptably widespread deregulation of these products, even though only 40% of them are classified as "low-risk substances" today[38]**: for example, the temporary 5-year approval of products containing active substances that have not yet been assessed; approval deemed to have been granted if a Member State fails to respond within 120 days; the possibility for EFSA to assume the role of Rapporteur Member State; the creation of a single zone instead of the current three; and **the removal of the obligation for all parties** in the product chain **to keep records** of production, import, export, stock, placing on the market and use of these products. This last provision severely undermines the ability of public authorities, scientists and citizens to monitor and assess these substances, which are likely to become increasingly prevalent on the market in the future.

These measures overturn the fundamental principles of risk assessment and severely restrict the scope for action – and thus the sovereignty – of Member States wishing to base their decisions on the risks posed by these molecules.

- **Lowering Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for pesticides to the detection threshold: a tentative step forward that must be pursued**

At present, 67 pesticides that are banned in European crops are unfortunately finding their way back onto the European continent, through entirely legal means, via our imports from non-EU countries. These pesticides are found in plant products intended for human and animal consumption, up to certain thresholds known as Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs). These thresholds pose several problems in Europe: they continue to pose a health risk, and their use creates an imbalance in production costs between European and non-European farmers, often at the expense of European producers. This issue came to the fore during discussions on the trade agreement between the European Union and the Mercosur countries, and subsequently encouraged France to advocate within the EU for MRLs "at the detection threshold" — in other words, zero.

However, the omnibus package provides the Commission with the possibility to reject a request to set an MRL and, by way of derogation, to revoke an existing MRL for pesticides banned in the EU only when the active substance meets certain criteria[39], applicable to a small number of substances[40]. Furthermore, the proposal allows for transitional measures to

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[37] POLLINIS, RNAi Genetic Pesticides: The Perfect Pesticides? – Debunking the agrochemical industry's new "green" facade, 13 May 2026.

[38] Source : IBMA.
Spinosad, for example, is a natural neurotoxin. This active substance came into use in biocontrol products included on the list of authorised products in France as of March 2026. The European Union has classified it, in line with its risk level and like most other conventional pesticides, in the "conventional" category.

[39] This would apply to substances classified as carcinogenic, mutagenic and toxic to reproduction (CMR): Categories 1A/1B, endocrine disruptors for humans or non-target organisms, persistent organic pollutants (POPs), persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic (PBT) substances or very persistent and very bioaccumulative (vPvB) substances.

[40] PAN Europe, Double Standards, Double Risks, September 2024, Annex II (p. 58).

continue marketing products with MRLs that are due to be removed, even when the reason for such removal relates to human health. The obligation to reassess temporary MRLs every ten years on the basis of monitoring data has been scrapped.

There is thus still a long way to go before achieving zero tolerance for residues of pesticides banned in the EU in our imports, despite the fact that such a measure would help protect the health of Europeans and gradually bring about changes in practices outside the European Union as well.

Our recommendations for a Europe that protects living beings over pesticide manufacturers

Since 2025, the European Commission appears to have embarked on a headlong rush towards "simplification". **Between welcome improvements** to streamline procedures and **out-of-control excesses** leading us towards outright deregulation, **the Food and Feed Safety Omnibus clearly favours the latter approach**.

And yet, the chemical industry is virtually absent from the Draghi report on the future of European competitiveness. But two-thirds of the European pesticide market are dominated by five companies: Syngenta, Bayer, Nufarm, BASF and Corteva, all of which also export their products to destinations around the world. This position, combined with the lobbying resources deployed[41], ensures that the chemical industry receives a very attentive ear from the European Commission. And what could be better for this industry than joining a broad simplification drive to push through its demands and continue to lock Europe into its dependence on pesticides?

Today, **the effects of pesticides on biodiversity and health are increasingly well-documented, as are the existing alternatives**[42]. And European citizens are increasingly well-informed. The quality of drinking water, river water, soil and air; pesticide residues in food; work-related and everyday illnesses linked to the environment; and even the number of animal species present or absent from gardens and the countryside: all these issues are now part of the everyday concerns of consumers, nature lovers and agricultural professionals alike. And growing numbers of them are **refusing to sacrifice their environment and their health for the benefit of a handful of large multinational corporations**.

The problem of delays in assessment and approval procedures does indeed warrant attention, because:

- It is currently driving the European Commission to circumvent regulation in order to **extend the marketing approval of pesticides without re-evaluating them** (explanations on page 10).

[41] The industry's lobbying spending (€10 million per year) exceeds the budget that EFSA can allocate to pesticide assessment. POLLINIS, BASIC and CCFD-Terre Solidaire, Pesticides: a model that's costing us dearly, November 2021

[42] Cellier V., Ortiz-Vallejo D., Colnenne-David C. et al. (2024). A 10-year experimental study in France shows the potential of pesticide-free agricultural production. Innovations Agronomiques, 98, 300-318, 10.

- It **stalls the placing on the market of new substances that could be less harmful** than those currently used by farmers. Today, assessments of these new substances may be considered secondary compared to other, more harmful products that are already on the market and whose approval is due to expire in the near future.

But the solutions that we suggest differ significantly from what is being proposed by the Omnibus bill. **It is possible to address most of the existing challenges without weakening the present regulatory framework**. Our recommendations largely echo **those already made by the European Parliament in 2019**[43] **and by the European Commission in 2020**[44]. It is high time to implement them. Furthermore, **the EFSA itself has launched an internal working process to mitigate the factors causing delays** in assessments, with a concrete action plan[45].

To enable health agencies to deliver their mandate within set timeframes:

(Recommendations previously made by the European Commission in 2020[46])

1. **Align existing fees**[47]**, levied by Member States, with the true costs** of assessments and authorisations, and ensure that they benefit the authorities actually carrying out the work on behalf of the EFSA. These fees are paid by manufacturers applying for marketing authorisation and do not fully cover the costs incurred in processing the application.

2. **Increase the resources allocated to the EFSA** to enable it to carry out its missions successfully and ensure the trust of European citizens in their health agency. It is undeniable that advances in science are leading to more technically complex tests for pesticide assessments and a greater volume of data to be verified. In 2023, Mr Guilhem de Sèze, head of the EFSA's Risk Assessment Production Department, estimated that the EFSA needed to recruit around **50 additional staff**, or approximately **two people per Member State**, at a total cost of 15 million euros[48]: a solution reiterated by EFSA in May 2026 in response to French MP Benoît Biteau, and which **would make it possible to catch up on evaluation delays in just 3 years, compared to 8 under the European Commission's proposal**[49].

To speed up assessment and approval procedures, and to ensure their quality and independence:

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[43] European Parliament, European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2019 on the Union's authorisation procedure for pesticides (2018/2153(INI)) (2018/2153(INI))
[44] Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Evaluation of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 on the placing of plant protection products on the market and of Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 on maximum residue levels of pesticides, 2020.
[45] In 2025, the EFSA produced a document entitled "Improving the Speed of Risk Assessment Improvement" in which it analyses the factors causing delays in assessment and proposes possible improvements. Implementation is currently underway.
[46] *op.cit.*
[47] For France, the fee schedule is set by the Decree of 4 July 2022. There is *de facto* competition between EU Member States to attract applications from manufacturers, which takes the form of reduced fees that no longer cover the real costs for national health agencies. Ultimately, everyone loses out: health agencies, citizens and taxpayers, and even the manufacturers whose applications are processed behind schedule by the agencies.
[48] Hearing of Guilhem de Sèze and Chloé de Lentdecker at France's National Assembly, 20 September 2023
[49] Email exchange between Benoît Biteau and EFSA on omnibus X, May 8, 2026.

3. **Only process complete, high-quality applications from manufacturers**, whether for initial authorisation or renewal of authorisation for active substances, or for authorisation of plant protection products, and **impose penalties** where the applicant's lack of good faith is evident.

4. **Stop the evaluation of a substance as soon as toxicity is proven** (cut-off criteria) to streamline the work of health agencies and redirect it to potentially less harmful substances. Currently, all substances undergo a full evaluation.

5. **Update the mandatory assessment protocols** to incorporate internationally agreed standards (OECD guidelines) and thus **ensure consistent rules across health agencies**, based on the most up-to-date scientific knowledge. In practical terms, this would involve the European Commission adopting the EFSA's recommendations in its 2013 Bee Guidance document, and at a minimum, the 2023 Bee Guidance.

6. **Improve the transparency of European decisions, particularly within the SCoPAFF**, which assists the Commission in its final decisions on pesticide authorisation and has the power to suspend procedures (clock stop) without justification. **Publicly disclose the names of SCoPAFF members and the details of discussions and votes**, as well as the details of assessments.

7. **Broaden the scope of entities eligible to appeal to the European Commission to re-evaluate an active substance**, a right currently reserved solely for Member States. If "official or scientific bodies working in the agricultural sector or professional agricultural organisations" can request mutual recognition, why not allow them to appeal to the European Commission? And why not extend this right to NGOs, doctors' associations or citizens' groups? For these stakeholders, as for Member States, **clear and binding procedures, criteria and deadlines should be established** to compel the Commission to initiate a substance's re-evaluation.

To achieve the goal of agricultural practices that respect the environment and human health:

8. **Support the agricultural transition, by funding independent research into the effects of pesticides and their alternatives, and by reforming the CAP** to assist farmers. According to the foresight study of INRAE, the French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food, and Environment, the phasing out of a pesticide-based agricultural model is a realistic prospect for European agriculture by 2050, provided that consistent and coordinated public policies are in place[50].

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[50] INRAE, European Pesticide-Free Agriculture in 2050, March 2023.