



PRESS RELEASE

1 million European valid signatures to Save Bees and Farmers

A historic step to stop the war against nature

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, 10 OCTOBER 2022 - The European Citizens Initiative (ECI) [Save Bees and Farmers](#) has passed the 1 million valid signatures milestone. The certificates of 27 EU member states have been accepted and the European Commission [has declared the ECI successful](#). This success marks a very clear and loud wish by EU citizens to strongly reduce pesticide use. The initiative's 1,1 million citizens demand a phase-out of synthetic pesticides and a restoration of nature in agricultural areas. As a next step, the organisers will be invited by the Commission and, within 3 months, a hearing in the European Parliament will take place to exchange with MEPs about the ECI's demands.

The Save Bees and Farmers ECI is asking for:

- A phasing out of 80% of the use of synthetic pesticides by 2030 and 100% by 2035
- A restoration of biodiversity on agricultural land
- Financial support for farmers to transition towards agroecological practices

Martin Dermine, the main representative of this ECI and executive director of PAN Europe said:

"This is the seventh successful ECI and already the second one against pesticides [1]. It is a strong democratic signal to EU and national decision-makers to listen to citizens and move away from toxic pesticides. Farmers and science have shown that agroecology can feed the world without chemicals. It is high time our politicians stop listening to agribusiness and start to work for the future of our children."

Helmut Burtscher-Schaden, deputy main representative of the ECI (GLOBAL 2000, Friends of the Earth Austria) added:

"In many EU countries, agriculture ministries seem to have an unhealthy faith in the blessings of agribusiness or too close a relationship. Therefore, they aim to prevent changes that would free our food system from its dependence on chemicals. Collecting 1 million valid signatures during the Covid pandemic, however, is a strong signal for a transition to climate- and bee-friendly farming."

Noa Simón, one of ECI starters, Scientific director of BeeLife, veterinarian, ecotoxicologist and beekeeper stated:

"Beekeepers and anyone paying attention to his/her surroundings realise how necessary this ECI is. Besides, the scientific evidence of pesticides' harm to human, animal and

environmental health is unequivocal. We radically need to reduce their use and help farmers in the process. Luckily national governments have good opportunities to achieve both via the Regulations on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides, currently being debated, and the Common Agricultural Policy, currently defining its implementation. More than one million European Citizens would not understand EU governments miss the opportunity."

Historic step: environment no longer in the hands of the chemical lobby

The loud voice of civil society marks the end of an era where decisions about our environment at EU and national level were dominated by the producers of chemicals. Since the sixties, the Green Revolution has pushed farmers to use patented seeds, high doses of artificial fertilisers and an ever-increasing amount of synthetic pesticides. These inputs make intensive farming completely dependent on agrochemicals and fossil fuels. Farmers do the work, but it is the traders and industry as well as their shareholders that reap the profits. The organisers behind this ECI are asking for a change: farmers deserve a decent income with fair prices and a healthy future for their farm and family!"

Urgent and necessary step

The chemical farming model comes with a high price for society. Biodiversity is collapsing, our soils are depleted, water is contaminated, farmers are being poisoned, and our health is at risk from pesticide residues in our foods. Our landscape has become toxic due to expanding industrial monocultures.

At a very important moment in time

Currently, the EU institutions are discussing a new pesticide reduction law that will regulate pesticide use for many years to come. The outcome will have huge impacts on nature and health in Europe. The pesticide lobby fears a drop in income and their allies are raising loud protests in many countries.

In honour of Rachel Carson: we say no to a Silent Spring

Sixty years ago, Rachel Carson published her famous book *Silent Spring*. She gave the world an important warning: pesticide use will lead to a dead world. Pesticides like DDT were banned, but we missed the opportunity of taking 'the other road' she describes in the last chapter of her book. Instead, pesticides were replaced by new ones, often even more toxic to insects and the environment than DDT. We're now at Peak Pesticide, the world has never before used such a quantity of pesticides. Sixty years later we can clearly see the Silent Spring coming with a sharp decline in insect and bird populations in many areas. The loud voice of the citizens behind our ECI is a tribute to the work of Rachel Carson. We urgently need a change in paradigm to stop this war against nature and the system of death. That is what one million Europeans are now calling for. We do not want a Silent Spring. We want to bring life, flowers and insects back to the fields. The future of farming is in working with nature, not destroying it.

Only nature-friendly farming will give us food security

The future of our food depends on healthy soils that feed healthy plants and resist droughts. Preserving biodiversity is the only option to ensure long-term food production. The science is clear: continued use of artificial fertiliser and pesticides will lead to dead soils and a total

collapse of pollination and food production. The path towards a lasting food security and a future for our children, grandchildren and the generations to come is a world where we live in balance with our environment, without poisoning it.

Organisers

The European Citizens Initiative was organised by Générations Futures (France), Global 2000 (Austria), Aurelia Stiftung, BUND and the Umweltinstitut München (Germany), Romapsis (Romania) and the European organisations: Beelife European Beekeeping Coordination, Friends of the Earth Europe, PAN Europe, Slow Food International and the European Professional Beekeepers Association. It was supported by [over 200 organisations from all countries in the EU](#). Signatures with the formally required personal data were collected in all member states. Ten countries [3] reached the minimum threshold set by the EU and combined with the total number of valid signatures this makes it an official request on the agenda of the European Commission and Parliament.

www.savebeesandfarmers.eu

[1] Up to now, 94 ECIs have been launched and only 7 succeeded to collect 1 million validated signatures. In 2017, the STOP Glyphosate ECI successfully collected 1.07 million valid signatures, asking for a ban on glyphosate, more transparency on the industry toxicity tests and a phase out of pesticides.

[2] On 22 June 2022, the European Commission proposed a new Regulation on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides, aiming at reducing the use and risks of pesticides by 50% until 2030. This proposal will now be discussed in the European Parliament and the European Council to agree on a final regulation in the coming year. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ganda_22_3694

[3] To be valid, an ECI must collect over one million valid signatures in the EU and reach a minimum threshold in at least 7 Member States. The 10 countries that reached the EU minimum threshold are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Romania and Spain.

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For more information please contact:

BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination: Kata Gócs, Communications Officer, comms@bee-life.eu or visit www.bee-life.eu or www.savebeesandfarmers.eu

BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination

BE 92 0688 9824 8723 – BIC: GKCC BE BB - VAT No. BE 0540.608.912. VAT not Applicable. RPM Nivelles