European Commission economic impact study on proposed changes to EU pesticide MRL rules

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JRC (2026) Assessing the economic impacts of stronger alignment of production standards applied to imported products on the EU's agricultural sector. European Commission Joint Research Centre.

What is changing and why?

This study by the European Commisson's Joint Research Centre (JRC) assesses the potential economic impacts of proposed changes to the European Union (EU) rules on pesticide maximum residue levels (MRLs). It focuses on 18 pesticides identified as being particularly affected, and models 235 commodities from 86 exporting countries. It notes that that there is insufficient evidence to predict the full effects.

In December 2025, the Commission proposed changes to MRL rules to align requirements for imported products with those applying to EU production. The proposal allows for the reduction of existing MRLs to 0.01 mg/kg (the limit of quantification, LOQ) on pesticides not approved in the EU where they are categorised as particularly hazardous for public health or the environment. This could reduce the pesticide options currently available to non-EU suppliers to the EU market.

The study estimates that lower MRLs on these substances could reduce imports, increase EU production and raise consumer prices. It models future impacts – if non-EU countries can adapt their production methods to continue complying with EU rules and exporting to the EU, the projected decline in imports is just 0.4%; however, this rises to 41% if countries are not able to adapt. The study also includes an in-depth analysis of cyproconazole, which finds that using alternatives to this substance could raise production costs by 20–40%.

The study notes that impact could be limited or very significant depending on the extent exporting countries are able to adjust production practices. The researchers indicate that further assessment is needed for a more precise understanding of the implications.

Actions

The JRC has indicated that further data is needed on the substances listed in Table 1 to fully understand the potential economic impacts of lowering the MRLs. Export sectors in non-EU countries that are currently using these substances should gather information that can be submitted to the upcoming impact assessment announced by the European Commission.

In particular, the JRC identifies the need for information on:

- the actual use and economic importance of specific substances in exporting countries
- situations where MRLs have been reduced to the LOQ in the past, and where associated data is available on the impact this had on yield, production costs, and trade.

Timeline

In November 2025 the European Commission indicated that the next steps in the impact assessment would follow the publication of the JRC study in summer of 2026 (European Commission 2025).

For more information see the full record on the AGRINFO website – where you can also view the latest AGRINFO Update newsletters and search the database.

Tables & Figures

Table 1: Eighteen active substances that are the focus of the JRC's 2026 economic impact study

	Recent regulatory developments	
Substances identified as economically impacted by proposed changes to MRL rules*	MRLs lowered to the LOQ, applies from:	Proposal to lower MRLs to the LOQ:
Benomyl	29 January 2027	
Benthiavalicarb	12 August 2026	
Carbendazim	29 January 2027	
Chlordecone		
Clofentezine		
Cyproconazole		
Dicofol		Notified to World Trade Organization June 2026
Dimethomorph		
Flufenacet (formerly fluthiamide)		
Glufosinate		
Isopyrazam		
Mancozeb		
Mepanipyrim		
Metiram		
Metribuzin	6 January 2027	
Quinoxyfen		
Spirodiclofen		
Thiophanate-methyl	29 January 2027	

*Substances identified as highly hazardous, with at least one MRL above the limit of quantification (LOQ), at least one residue detection reported in the EU, the substance authorised in at least one country.
For certain substances listed in this table the EU has already approved, or has proposed, lowering the MRL to the LOQ.

Source: based on JRC (2026).

For up-to-date information see the AGRINFO Pesticide MRL Tracker; also see AGRINFO reports on benomyl, benthiavalicarb, carbendazim, dicofol, metribuzin, and thiophanate-methyl.

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