Simplification of rules on pesticide MRLs and approvals

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Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulations 999/2001, 1829/2003, 1831/2003, 852/2004, 853/2004, 396/2005, 1099/2009, 1107/2009, 528/2012, 2017/625 as regards the simplification and strengthening of food and feed safety requirements

What is changing and why?

The European Commission is proposing the following changes to pesticide-related Regulations, primarily to align the rules that apply to imported and products and those produced in the European Union (EU), and to facilitate the transition from chemical pesticides to more sustainable biopesticides.

Pesticide maximum residue levels (Regulation 396/2005)

Import tolerances: Regulation 396/2025 allows for the adoption of import tolerances (MRLs) on food exported to the EU, for pesticides not approved in the EU, where it is established that these levels do not pose any risk to consumers. Under the proposed changes, for pesticides not approved in the EU that are categorised as particularly hazardous to human health or the environment, the Commission proposes to lower the MRLs to the default level (0.01 mg/kg). For pesticides that do not fall within this category (that is, without particularly hazardous properties), the EU will still be permitted to set MRLs for imported products based on Codex standards, or on the basis of authorisations in a non-EU country and good agricultural practice.

Transition periods: Under the new proposal, products that were compliant at the time they were put on the EU market or placed into storage after production could be sold through to the end of their shelf life, even if there is a subsequent MRL change. Companies must prove the product was compliant at the time.

Approval of pesticides in the EU (Regulation 1107/2009)

Renewal procedures: Pesticides already approved for use in the EU will no longer require reassessment and renewal every 10 years. Approvals will generally be for an unlimited period, with time-limited approval possible where considered necessary or desirable. Rules for qualifying as a low-risk pesticide, and for approving pesticides for small or special (“minority”) crops, will be simplified.

Biopesticides: The definition of biopesticides will be clarified to simplify data demands and reduce delays. Authorities will prioritise the evaluation of biopesticides before chemical

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pesticides.

Actions

For an understanding of the potential impact of the proposed rules on MRLs/import tolerances, suppliers exporting products to the EU can verify the categorisation of pesticides in the following way.

1. Check whether a pesticide is approved for use in the EU using EU Pesticide Database – Active substances – type the name of the substance into the search box.
2. If “not approved” (marked in a red box), check the categorisation of the pesticide using the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) database. Information may not be available for all pesticides.

The World Trade Organization and EU Have your say consultations are now closed.

Timeline

This proposal has entered a process of discussion and adoption by the Council of the EU (Member States) and the European Parliament, a process that can take 1–2 years.

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.

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