

Food & Feed Omnibus, co-written by the pesticide lobby

How the European Commission and right-wing MEPs are writing industry demands into law, at the expense of our health and the environment.



Corporate
Europe
Observatory

Executive summary

Key lobby demands of the pesticide industry and big farming lobby groups have been inserted into Food & Feed Omnibus proposals.

Omnibus X is paving the way for the dismantling of EU pesticide regulations by allowing harmful pesticides to remain in use instead of switching to alternatives.

Corporate Europe Observatory compared key industry lobby demands against the Commission's Omnibus proposal as well as the proposals of the co-rapporteurs and other MEPs. Key findings include:

- Unlimited pesticide approvals were on the wish list of both producer Bayer and Copa-Cogeca (big farmers' lobby) and were discussed in lobby meetings held by DG SANTE with lobby groups. However, this proposal was kept from public interest groups. The Commission made unlimited approvals for chemical pesticides to be the core element of Omnibus X.
- MEP co-rapporteurs Herbert Dorfmann and Michele Picaro want to extend unlimited approvals to pesticide products (mixtures approved at a national level) and propose applying these rules retrospectively, thus delivering on demands made by producers Bayer and BASF.
- The Omnibus prolongs grace periods for withdrawn or banned pesticides to up to three years when there is 'no alternative'. Dorfmann and Picaro are pushing for a three-year default grace period – exactly what industry lobby CropLife Europe and Bayer demanded.
- Omnibus X expands the scope for EU-wide derogations (opt-outs), meeting industry demands. A demand by lobbyists from Bayer, CropLife and Copa-Cogeca to further widen the possibility of derogations by including an agro-economic assessment was integrated by Dorfmann and Picaro. Other MEPs copied industry wording to extend derogations to up to ten years.

Notably far-right MEPs even challenge the EU's ban on pesticides that can cause cancer or disrupt the hormonal system (the so-called 'cut-off criteria') in their amendments.

While CropLife and Copa-Cogeca are lobbying under the slogan 'no ban without alternatives', they are at the same time opposing special treatment for biocontrol products that could present better alternatives. Copa-Cogeca is collaborating more and more with the pesticide industry in lobbying activities, even though farmers and agricultural workers are the first to be exposed to the industry's harmful products.

CropLife is also lobbying the Commission to regain industry influence over the European Food Safety Authority.

Corporate Europe Observatory calls for the withdrawal of the Food & Feed Omnibus and for firewall measures to prevent EU policy-making from being influenced by narrow private interests.

Content

Executive summary	2
Introduction	4
Food and Feed Omnibus: a closer look	5
Box: Abandoning green promises	6
Scientists and doctors raise the alarm	6
A proposal written in haste – procedural shortcomings	7
MEPs Herbert Dorfmann and Michele Picaro making Omnibus worse	8
Misleading lobby narrative: ‘No Ban Without Alternative’	9
Box: Beyond the Omnibus – increasing corporate influence over EFSA	10
Pesticide industry fears competition from biocontrols	11
Lobby demand 1: Unlimited pesticide approvals, abandon renewal assessments	12
Lobby demand 2: Expanding unlimited approvals to national level, and retrospectively	13
Lobby demand 3: Widen the scope to obtain derogations for banned pesticides, for up to 10 years	13
Lobby demand 4: Another 3-year free ride - longer grace periods	14
Lobby demand 5: Attack on EU ban on carcinogenic, hormone disrupting pesticides	15
Box: Don’t mention PFAS pesticides	16
Another battleground: Lowering the residues of banned pesticides on imported food?	17
Box: Farm lobby Copa-Cogeca instrumentalised by pesticide lobby – again.	17
Meanwhile in the Council: member states divided	18
Conclusion: Time to stop industry’s deregulation agenda	18

Introduction

As part of the second Von der Leyen Commission's deregulation agenda, EU food and environmental safety rules are under attack.

[Omnibus X](#), officially called the Food and Feed Safety Omnibus, was published on 16 December 2025. This was the tenth package of deregulation proposals released in just one year. Covering several topics, the bulk of the proposals in the Omnibus shoot big holes in the EU pesticide legislation.

Industry saw huge potential in this initiative. Pesticide lobby group Croplife Europe, along with other corporate actors, just ahead of the Omnibus publication [made sure to emphasise](#) that their expectations for the Food and Feed Omnibus were “extremely high”, and that “cosmetic changes are not enough”. Indeed, they called for “successive Omnibus packages [to be] proposed whenever necessary”.

Showing much greater concern for industry profits than for sustainability, and rolling back on all promises made in the EU Green Deal, the second [von der Leyen Commission produced](#) no less than ten deregulatory Omnibus packages in 2025 alone. Omnibus X therefore was written in great haste by DG SANTE, and is now being rushed through the institutions. Its official name – the Food and Feed Safety Simplification Package – suggests safety will be guaranteed, and rules will just be simplified. However, a closer look reveals both claims to be far from the truth.

Lobby evidence revealed in this report shows how pesticide and big farming lobby groups had ample opportunity to influence the Omnibus X proposal. The report is based on dozens of lobby documents obtained by Corporate Europe Observatory from the European Commission (EC) through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests or found online; submissions by corporations and lobby groups to the Call for Evidence, a Call for Information, and post-publication Feedback mechanism of the EC; official documents; and NGO, legal and academic analyses. An overview of examples can be found in [this Annex](#).

For instance, the report shows:

- Bayer, in tandem with the big farm lobby Copa-Cogeca, lobbied the Commission in favour of unlimited approvals for pesticides. The Commission listened, and delivered. Omnibus X abandons the periodic safety reviews for pesticides that currently happen every ten or fifteen years.
- Italian co-rapporteurs in the European Parliament, EPP MEP Herbert Dorfmann and far-right MEP Michele Picaro, and other MEPs from the same political groups, copy-pasted other industry demands into amendments, including: wider scope for unlimited pesticide approvals, longer grace periods, agro-economic assessments in derogation decisions, and more.
- Big farm lobby Copa-Cogeca is increasingly open about its collaboration with the pesticide industry. Regarding Omnibus X, they use the same slogan – “No Ban Without Alternative” – and even organised a joint event for MEPs at the Copa-Cogeca offices. Despite farmers being the most exposed to pesticides, this seems of no concern to them!
- An internal Croplife Europe powerpoint presentation shows discussion on how to deploy the slogan “No Ban Without Alternatives”: not only pushing to weaken pesticide legislation via the Omnibus, but also seeking changes to European Food Safety Authority processes – calling for more industry influence over the agency.

Deregulation at the level now negotiated would keep farmers caught in the chemical treadmill, with disastrous consequences for people's health - most of all farmers themselves - and the environment. Three EU countries (France, Germany and Italy) have already recognised Parkinson's disease as an occupational illness among farmers due to pesticide exposure. Also, pollinating insects will be further harmed, on which many farmers depend.

The Agriculture and Environment committees in the European Parliament are, however, facing difficult negotiations over the 1,500 tabled amendments, with a committee vote expected later in autumn. The Council adopted its position in late September. While it contains some slight improvements, it still considerably [lowers the level of protection](#) against pesticides. Once both the Parliament and the Council have reached a position, the so-called trilogue negotiations will begin, also involving the Commission.

Food and Feed Omnibus: a closer look

The Omnibus proposal that was presented on 16 December 2025 by Health Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi and 'deregulation chief' Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis, abandons the current time-limited EU approval for pesticides and thereby deletes the require-

ment for a periodic renewal approval every 10 or 15 years. These renewal assessments are an important safeguard as it is when the chemical substance is re-examined in view of the latest knowledge and science. In the past, the periodic review of pesticides has led to the withdrawal of several harmful substances, such as mancozeb or chlorpyrifos.

Without the periodic re-assessment, scrutiny of new available insights and evidence will no longer happen automatically. This will make it more difficult to get harmful products off the market, as new studies that show harm to people or the environment would not necessarily be considered. Moreover, under the Omnibus, public authorities will be responsible for selecting cases for which the latest scientific data warrant a re-assessment. This creates a new administrative burden for public authorities while reducing the obligations of private corporations — all at the expense of stricter public health protection.

As an analysis by the French organisation Générations Futures [shows](#), "49 synthetic pesticides could automatically receive unlimited approval as of 1 January 2027", including "glyphosate, acetamiprid and some PFAS pesticides". The decision to re-evaluate a pesticide thus becomes "dependent on political will and on the monitoring capacity of under-resourced agencies", [says an academic analysis](#).

Another problem regards the pesticide mixtures as sold in farm shops, that are approved by national governments. Under the new rules, it will become more difficult for them to base their approvals on the latest available science, as they would only be allowed use the scientific evidence from the most recent EU assessment. But as a result of changes made by the Omnibus, there might only be one very outdated assessment available.

The Omnibus X rolls back EU pesticide safeguards in other ways too:

- Substantially extends the duration that certain banned pesticides can remain on the market by broadening the scope of derogations.
- Doubles the maximum phase-out grace periods (when they can still be sold or used) for pesticides that are withdrawn or banned.
- Allows for easier mutual recognition of pesticide formulated products between Member States.

- Eases approval of pesticides for so-called ‘minor uses’.
- Allows for the use of drones to apply pesticides, undoing the current ban on aerial spraying in the EU.

[The Commission argued](#) that the current system with standard renewals led to “significant delays, which then requires extensions of approvals”. But there were other ways to solve this problem. According to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) itself – the EU agency that provides advice on pesticide approval – these delays could [have instead been solved](#) by “recruiting around 50 additional experts and rejecting incomplete industry dossiers”, which “would drastically reduce delays in pesticide reassessments”.

A draft of the Omnibus text was leaked on 28 November 2025, which led to an immediate outcry. [Foodwatch said](#) that the draft Omnibus brings “very real risks for 450 million European consumers, whose interests are absent from the proposal”. An independent legal opinion commissioned by ClientEarth, PAN-Europe and four German organisations [said the Omnibus may not be compatible](#) with the precautionary principle and “the high level of protection for health and the environment guaranteed under European law”. In France, 114 environment to public health organisations [co-signed an open letter](#) in Le Monde, which called on the Commission to withdraw the proposal.

Abandoning green promises

Just a few years prior to this, the [EU Farm to Fork strategy](#) promised to raise ambition on moving food production away from the intensive use of pesticides; a proposal that was backed by two impact assessment and ample scientific evidence showing how urgently this change was needed. A few years prior to that (2019), the EU Parliament published an own investigation (by the so-called ‘[PEST committee](#)’), which made over 100 recommendations to improve the EU’s pesticide rules. This exercise was triggered by the infamous glyphosate-affair, and the publication of [the Monsanto Papers](#).

A citizen-science coalition [published a White Paper](#) with similar recommendations.

However, the Green Deal flagship proposal - the pesticide reduction law SUR – was ultimately defeated in November 2023, after [a staunch industry lobby campaign](#), and with help from the Christian-Democrat party EPP. Large polluting corporations aimed to re-capture the EU political agenda after the 2024 EU elections though the so-called ‘Antwerp Declaration, and Omnibus proposals were listed as a key demand to roll back ‘burdensome’ social and environmental standards.

Scientists and doctors raise the alarm

DG SANTE of the European Commission, leading on the Food and Feed Omnibus, [keeps denying](#) that the Omnibus X will lower standards. This claim has been strongly countered by scientists.

In response to the leaked Omnibus, [over 200 researchers and medical professionals](#) warned on 9 December 2025 that the Omnibus X proposal would “weaken fundamental safeguards in pesticide risk assessment” and called for a strengthening of the EU pesticide rules.

A scientific assessment commissioned by the Dutch Parliament, published in April 2026, [underlined that under the Omnibus](#) “there is a good chance that substances that have harmful effects on the environment and health in the case of long-term exposure will remain on the market”. Indeed, the Omnibus will “shift the burden of proof from pesticide

producers to public authorities or other actors, moving responsibility away from industry and weakening the precautionary approach”.

[An academic paper](#) by two dozen authors, published in Science in June 2026 under the title “EU Omnibus proposal increases pesticide risks”, stated that “implementing the Omnibus package would amplify rather than resolve shortcomings of current environmental risk assessment.”

The European Society for Endocrinology, the Endocrine Society and European Society for Paediatric Endocrinology (ESPE), organisations with thousands of members, [in a public statement](#) in early September 2026, called on the members of the AGRI and ENVI committees in the European Parliament “to reject parts of the Food and Feed Safety Omnibus that could weaken protections against harmful chemicals, including endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs)”.

On 16 September 2026, over 500 scientists and doctors [signed and published an open letter](#), which received widespread media coverage. They called for negotiations to “be paused until a rigorous, independent assessment of the Omnibus X proposal related to health, environmental and administrative consequences has been carried out”.

A proposal written in haste – procedural shortcomings

The documents obtained by Corporate Europe Observatory show that the Food and Feed Omnibus was written in great haste. DG SANTE [acknowledged to the sugar beet lobby group](#) CIBE that they had been “under

extremely tight deadlines” when developing the Omnibus.

But industry definitely got a head start. A first ‘Call for Information’ was [sent out by the Commission](#) on 2 July 2025, but it exclusively targeted members of Croplife EU (the pesticide industry), Copa-Cogeca, members of IBMA (biocontrol producers) and organic producers organisation IFOAM Organics. While IFOAM was invited to this Call, [their very clear opposition](#) against “any deregulation of standards carried out in the name of simplification”, went completely ignored.

The Call for Information outlined 10 questions, focused almost entirely on economic issues like the cost of renewal dossiers, the delays experienced in renewal being issued, economic losses due to these delays, etc. The deadline for response was 13 August. In a very informal exchange with Croplife EU about granting some flexibility on the deadline, [a Commission official said](#) “Few days more seem possible, but up to September unfortunately seems a bit unfeasible for us because at that time we would need to get our analysis completed”.

Other organisations and citizens were granted their first opportunity to give input through a ‘Call for Evidence’ opened on 16 September 2025 and lasting one month. This call approach was more technical than the broader public consultation that is usually undertaken. Nevertheless, 6,380 respondents took part, and as [PAN-Europe pointed out](#), an overwhelming majority of respondents “opposed the weakening of pesticide legislation and raised concerns about the introduction of unlimited approvals”. But, as the Omnibus proposal showed, the Commission did not take any of those responses into account.

As with other Omnibus proposals, to speed up the process a key step and standard tool in EU decision-making was skipped: no social and environmental impact assessment was undertaken for Omnibus X. This contrasts starkly with the process followed for the EU Farm to Fork files, like the pesticide reduction law (SUR). On that occasion, the EPP group

called relentlessly for additional impact assessments on top of the one already done, [re-minds](#) Générations Futures. Foodwatch International [filed a complaint](#) with the European Ombudswoman, criticising “serious procedural shortcomings in the preparation of the omnibus package”, including the lack of impact assessment and proper public consultation.



MEPs Dorfmann and Picaro making Omnibus worse

The Omnibus proposal then went to the Council (EU Member States) and the European Parliament (EP). In the Parliament, Herbert Dorfmann (EPP)

and Michele Picaro (Fratelli, ECR) were appointed as co-rapporteurs. As the following sections demonstrate, their [proposed amendments would worsen](#) Omnibus X, and would cause even more damage to public health.

Their own report revealed that they exclusively sought inputs from the pesticide industry and agribusiness lobbies, and the biocontrols industry, as they prepared their own position. The co-rapporteurs consulted with corporations Bayer, BASF and Corteva; pesticide producers' lobby groups CropLife, ECCA and Euroseeds; farm groups including Copa-Cogeca, and various Italian lobby groups such as ConfAgricoltura, the lobby of large agricultural producers in Italy.

Key areas where Dorfmann and Picaro [worsened Omnibus X](#) include:

- Extending unlimited approvals to pesticide formulated products by EU member states.
- Applying Omnibus rules retrospectively, abandoning ongoing renewal assessments.
- For derogations and candidates for substitution, “socio-economic and agro-economic assessment” would be actively considered.
- Derogations for non-approved pesticides would be extended beyond five years.
- Grace periods would be extended to up to three years following a product's withdrawal or non-renewal.
- Even the very problematic ‘candidates for substitution’ would get 15 years approval. Approval criteria to be diluted by considering ‘risk mitigation measures’.

DeSmog [previously revealed](#) the one-sided way in which prominent MEPs of the EPP group inform themselves when the Parliament debated pesticide reduction. An analysis of meetings attended by six key EPP MEPs between January 2020 and July 2023 found that the group met industry-linked groups eight times more frequently than non-governmental groups representing public interests. Three of these MEPs — Herbert Dorfmann, Alexander Bernhuber and Norbert Lins — are still in office.

Misleading lobby narrative: ‘No Ban Without Alternative’

The pesticide reduction law SUR was defeated in 2023, based on a misleading narrative which claimed that pesticide reduction would jeopardise food security in Europe. As [exposed in 2022 Corporate Europe Observa-](#)

[tory report](#) ‘A loud lobby for a silent spring’, the food security narrative was underpinned by industry-sponsored ‘impact studies’ from research institutes such as Wageningen University. This University [later apologised](#) for its role in the corporate lobby campaign that led to the defeat of SUR.

Lobbying around the Omnibus, meanwhile, builds on this narrative. Facing an ‘empty toolbox’ if pesticides get banned, farmers’ competitiveness will be harmed, claim industry voices. For instance, in a meeting with DG AGRI on 4 September 2025, [Copa-Cogeca repeated](#) the ‘empty toolbox’ argument. As many active substances have been withdrawn, [the organisation argued](#), and with few new alternatives entering the market, this “causes rising costs of production and reduced productivity”.

But are there really no existing alternatives for EU farmers to deal with pests?

Kristine De Schamphelaere of PAN Europe responds: “Experts point out that it is actually the opposite. Ecologically sound approaches are not being fully adopted or encouraged without halting the use of harmful pesticides. This provides a clear path forward for all involved parties. Many studies, projects and farmers demonstrate that transitioning to resilient systems based on soil health, active pest prevention, biocontrol and other effective solutions is not only feasible, but also crucial for achieving good yields and profits. Current approaches have far exceeded their boundaries, imposing immense costs on society due to health impacts and ecosystem damage, even though food production depends on healthy ecosystems.” PAN-Europe [has documented](#) many examples of alternatives to pesticides, such as Integrated Pest Management.

The slogan ‘No Ban Without Alternatives’ was used jointly by pesticide producers (see [BASF](#) or [Croplife EU](#)) and agribusiness lobby [Copa-Cogeca](#). The slogan is not new. In fact, in 2023 [Bayer deployed it](#) in German for a (highly unusual) public petition run by [lobby firm Rud Pedersen](#). The petition aimed to keep glyphosate (Roundup) on the European market and was titled: “Glyphosat: Kein Verbot Ohne Alternative”.

In France, François Veillerette explains to CEO how the FNSEA has been using the slogan “no ban without alternative” regarding pesticides since [at least 2020](#). “It was hammered so relentlessly during the major agricultural protests of 2023–2024—and echoed by the French pesticide lobby, Phytéis—that it was eventually adopted by French government officials like Gabriel Attal. It was subsequently [enshrined as a policy objective](#) in the Agricultural Orientation Law of March 2025.”

The slogan was then echoed widely by pro-pesticide voices in Brussels, and not without result.

Agriculture Commissioner Christophe Hansen's 'Vision on Agriculture', stated that the Commission would "carefully consider any further ban of pesticides if alternatives are not yet available". This Vision, [as Corporate Europe Observatory reported](#), was controversial, as it clearly aimed to serve the interests of big agribusiness corporations. Its purpose seemed to be to overrule the recently adopted Strategic Dialogue on agriculture – the outcomes of which reflected a much broader set of views and interests.

The 'No Ban Without Alternative' slogan was carefully elaborated by the pesticide lobby in the run-up to the Omnibus. A June 2025 [Croplife powerpoint presentation](#) that CEO found, documents the lobby group's internal reflections (and "not necessarily the official position") on how this slogan should be deployed. The presentation shows that Croplife had already discussed how to approach the issue with the Commission, and asked how the company might provide "practical solutions that may resonate with the policy makers".

The presentation was prepared by Corrado Finardi, then director regulatory affairs at Croplife Europe. Finardi previously spent over 16 years working as an advisor for Italian farmer association Coldiretti, a prominent member of Copa-Cogeca. Ironically, he was then responsible for food safety issues. Croplife lobbyists currently involved in the Food and Feed Omnibus include Olivier de Matos and Emma Brown.

The presentation observed that while AGRI Commissioner Christophe Hansen's Vision on Agriculture indicated a "more positive direction of travel for the farmers toolbox, it remains unclear as to how alternatives for a given pesticide will be assessed". In response, the powerpoint suggested that any alternative substances should be required to tick a considerable number of boxes before being regarded as "viable". As only the existence of "viable" alternatives would enable the ban of a pesticide, this proviso would make bans less likely.

Beyond the Omnibus – increasing corporate influence over EFSA

Interestingly, the Croplife powerpoint discussed above reveals how the corporation does not see the existing EU pesticide Regulation (1107/2009) as a problem – for them the problems lie with "risk assessment practices as per Soft Law". For instance, the presentation says that a great deal of uncertainty comes from EFSA's Guidance Documents, which Corrado Finardi claimed "are becoming more and more conservative and fail to resonate with the broad political message of 'no ban without alternatives'". A pro-active approach was suggested to deal with this, focusing on reform of "non-legislative elements like EFSA procedures". The presentation suggested that it is "essential to address

parts of the risk assessment framework that resist change – especially within EFSA".

This 'pro-active' campaign had in fact already been launched. On 28 May 2025 a "broad coalition of business and agri-food industry stakeholders" including Croplife EU had [sent the Commission an open letter](#) demanding that more "real-world industry experts" be involved in the drafting of EFSA guidance documents. This would help ensure they were "fit-for-purpose, proportionate and predictable", as well as allowing "experts with hands-on experience and knowledge" (read: with close ties to industry) to join EFSA Panels. This would effectively result in EFSA's conflict-of-interest rules being rolled back and weakened.

The presentation also details how the lobby would "slow or stop withdrawal of substances (focus on 'No Ban')", and listed some "identified mechanisms to 'stop the ban'". One such mechanism is a 'risk-benefit assessment'. If the EU approval system balanced health risks against supposed 'benefits' for an agriculture made dependent on pesticides, this

would definitely be a huge hurdle to a harmful pesticide getting banned. Croplife also suggested to compare EU pesticide assessments with “best practices” from “around the world (including the US), such as risk- based assessments”. The US government for many years has tried to [weaken EU pesticide rules](#) - for instance in international trade negotiations. Talking about the Trump government, [former UN Special Rapporteur](#) on Toxics Marcos Orellana said in *EU Observer*: “We can see there is pressure on the EU and other countries to weaken regulatory controls to satisfy economic pressures from the US.”

Pesticide industry fears competition from biocontrols

But what about biocontrol products - more environmentally friendly methods to control pests? Would they not be able to fill the ‘empty toolbox’? Promoting biocontrol was, ostensibly, the Commission’s stated goal when it developed Omnibus X. On the day of its launch, AGRI Commissioner Christophe

Hansen [said the aim of the Food and Feed Omnibus was](#) to promote biocontrol solutions, in order to accelerate the transition towards “safer and more sustainable alternatives”.

However, chemical industry lobbyists repeatedly emphasised in their lobbying communication that biocontrol products should only be regarded as an additional part of the toolbox, and do not represent an adequate replacement for pesticide use. For example, the German chemical industry lobby VCI reacted to the Omnibus proposal by [saying that](#) prioritisation of biocontrol “must not come at the expense of modern chemical-synthetic innovations”.

[BASF argued](#) against a ‘fast-lane’ for biocontrol approvals, saying that such “strict prioritisation” should be replaced “with dedicated lanes that support the full spectrum of innovation”. The lobby group CIBE, promoting the interests of sugar beet growers, [told DG SANTE](#) in October 2025: “None of these [biocontrol] are as effective as the chemical active substances currently used”. It further said that “biocontrol solutions would at best be complementary to chemical pesticides, and are often a lot more expensive”.

However, Jennifer Lewis, the Executive Director of IBMA, the organisation of biocontrol producers, told Corporate Europe Observatory: “Biocontrol products in Europe take 10 years to reach the market. Therefore, any biocontrol product registered today is already 10 years old. The problem is not that biocontrol does not work. In Brazil, biocontrol is used on over 60 million hectares, with effective programmes for broad-acre crops, including soybeans, maize, potatoes and wheat. These are huge arable farms covering tens of thousands of hectares, and farmers can only use biocontrol products because they are effective, economical and practical to use.”

“Biocontrol can be included into any agricultural system to manage pests and diseases, from organic to conventional farming, and is particularly well suited to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) ones. EU farmers need these products badly: they provide additional choices for pest and disease control, help manage resistance to existing chemistry, reduce pesticide residues and enable European farmers to remain competitive on the global stage. The solution is to accelerate the approval and authorisation of all biocontrol products”.

Lobby demand 1: Unlimited pesticide approvals, abandon renewal assessments

While the outside world only learnt of the Omnibus plan to abandon the periodic safety reviews when a draft was leaked in late November 2025, lobby documents obtained by Corporate Europe Observatory reveal that it had been topic of discussion during lobby meetings between Commission officials and lobby groups for quite some time. Salomé Roynel, a policy officer at PAN-Europe, confirmed to CEO that the Commission had not informed her organisation of this plan.

Several groups had been calling for a drastic change in the EU periodic reviews - notably Croplife Europe, Bayer and Copa-Cogeca. Bayer and Copa-Cogeca called explicitly for unlimited pesticide approvals in their submissions to the Commission's 'Call for Evidence' on Omnibus X. [Bayer called](#) for authorisations to "be extended to 20 years or become unlimited with periodic literature reviews or safety update reports where needed".

[Copa-Cogeca also demanded](#) a change to the renewal system for pesticides, "so that reassessments are conducted only when new evidence of potential risks to human health or the environment emerges. We would encourage the Commission on following the path to abolish time limit on the re-approval of active substances". On 21 November 2025, [Copa-Cogeca repeated this call](#) in a letter to Commissioners Hansen (Agriculture) and Varhelyi (Health).

Introducing unlimited approvals for most pesticide active substances is exactly what the Commission proposed in the Food and Feed Omnibus published in December 2025.

Other documents show that DG SANTE discussed this measure with Copa-Cogeca and other lobby groups, long before the draft Omnibus was leaked on 28 November 2025. On 8 October 2025, DG AGRI and DG SANTE officials had a meeting with Copa-Cogeca, along with Croplife Europe, PROFEL (fruit and vegetable processors) and IBMA (biocontrol). DG AGRI's Elisabeth Werner informed them that the Commission was indeed considering changes to the pesticide renewal assessments.

For this meeting, DG SANTE [prepared a document](#) that referred to a joint Roadmap Copa-Cogeca had sent them, indicating that many of this Roadmap's proposals "are under our consideration".

The list of points that followed included "a more flexible and nuanced system for renewals of approvals, which would be more targeted to those substances with more problematic properties (e.g. candidates for substitution), while the majority of other substances would benefit from unlimited approvals – with the possibility to review their approval in case of need." This demand ended up being the central, and most damaging part, of the Omnibus X package.

However, what Copa Cogeca's Roadmap called for was that "the renewal process should allow unlimited approval after the first renewal." The Commission's Omnibus went beyond that, by fully scrapping the first renewal.

Lobby demand 2: Expanding unlimited approvals to national level, and retrospectively

After the Omnibus X proposal was published, BASF suggested, [in a 2026 position paper](#), that the renewal assessments could also be abandoned at EU member state level - where the formulated pesticide products (the mixtures as they are sold and used in the field) are assessed. BASF argued that to make the Omnibus effective, “simplification must not be undermined” by retaining periodic renewal assessments at national level. BASF called for “aligning” the timelines for formulated products, with those for active ingredients that are assessed at EU level – i.e. that they would also become unlimited.

The co-rapporteurs Dorfmann and Picaro took up this demand (in their Amendment 45) giving unlimited approval also to pesticide formulated products approved at national level. Concerningly, as PAN-Europe explains, the national level authorisation process “may become the only remaining moment where the industry is required to provide updated data and for authorities to identify new risks”.

BASF’s wish-list [also includes the idea](#) of applying unlimited approvals for active ingredients retrospectively to all renewal assessments that are currently ongoing. BASF calls this a “practical concern”, claiming that if ongoing re-approvals still need to then be concluded according to the Omnibus proposal, “the benefits of unlimited approvals may only materialise after a few years. Measures that can more immediately help unblock the regulatory pipeline are therefore also needed”.

Dorfmann and Picaro (am.35) dutifully deleted language in the Omnibus which said that ongoing re-approvals would still need to be completed.

Lobby demand 3: Widen the scope to obtain derogations for banned pesticides, for up to 10 years

In numerous pesticide industry lobby documents, one consistent demand is to integrate agro-economic concerns into pesticide derogation decisions. This would dilute the pesticide legislation’s main objectives of protecting human health and the environment.

Decisions around so-called ‘derogations’ are relevant here. EU Member States can grant exceptions (derogations) to enable them to keep using a banned product, a system that is widely abused in some countries, as evidenced by a [2023 PAN-Europe report](#). This report showed that over 2019-2022, no less than 236 derogations were granted by EU governments, for 14 different banned pesticides.

But the EU pesticide law (1107/2009) also provides for a second, EU-wide derogation option in art. 4(7). However, this type of derogation can be applied for a maximum of five years, and only if it is proven that there is a serious danger to plant health and that there is no other solution. This derogation option has never been used, as [PAN-Europe explained](#), “because in no case has it been proven that an active substance was truly essential and that no alternative solution existed”. This is what industry now wants to change.

[Bayer’s demand of the Commission](#) was for “effectively implementing the “No Ban Without Alternative” principle”, by adding an agro-economic assessment to the decision-making process on such EU-wide derogations. This should allow for “evaluating whether alternatives are not only available but also technically feasible, economically viable and scalable at farm level”. Bayer also demanded a doubling of the maximum period for such derogations “(up to 10 years)”.

[Copa-Cogeca, in its 21 November 2025 letter](#), echoed Bayer's demand to have "the possibility for a 10-year derogation" for using a banned substance, in case no "agronomically effective and economically viable alternative" is re-authorised.

The Commission responded to these demands in the [Omnibus X pesticide proposal](#). It enlarged the scope of this [EU-wide derogation](#) option to cases where they would not only be necessary for plant health, but also for "plant production". This means that an economic concern like occasional yield-reduction could be taken into account when granting a derogation for a harmful pesticide – something which previously was not allowed. However, the five year limit was not changed.

In their 2026 position paper on the Omnibus X, [Croplife applauded](#) the move. They went on to specify what it would entail: a "structured agronomic and agro-economic assessment", that would look at the "efficacy, scalability, cost/yield, operational constraints, IPM/resistance and uneven availability" of alternatives. [Croplife stated](#) that "this is essential to avoid losing essential tools where alternatives exist only on paper". In other words, an important tool to stop pesticides getting banned.

The two European Parliament co-rapporteurs Dorfmann and Picaro seem to have carefully read Croplife's wishes, as their report specifies that derogations "should be taken on the base of a socio-economic and agro-economic assessment including efficacy, impact of pests on farmers yield and risks for cross-resistance" (am.19).

Notably, Dorfmann and Picaro do not mention a time limit for the derogation. But Bayer's demand for a doubling of time period to up to 10 years is being proposed by MEPs such as EPP members Esther Herranz (am.388), Céline Imart (am.393), Daniel Buda (am.395), Paulo do Nascimento Cabral (am.396) and Alexander Bernhuber (am.397), as well as far-right members like Anne-Sophie Frigout, Mathilde Androuet (am. 394) or Ivan David and Anja Arndt (am. 389), who all called for 10-year derogations.

If their amendment passed, they would be responsible for farmers and the public continuing to be exposed to products that should have been banned for health reasons, for another decade! The word 'derogation' clearly has lost all meaning by then.

Lobby demand 4: Another 3-year free ride - longer grace periods

Comparing the Dorfmann-Picaro report with lobby documents sent by [Croplife](#) and [BASF](#) in Spring 2026 to the Commission on Omnibus X, it is striking that the co-rapporteurs also copied the corporate demand to expand the grace periods after a pesticide gets banned.

The Commission's Omnibus proposal already created the option to extend the grace period from a total of maximum 18 months to a maximum of three years – one year grace period for sale/distribution, plus two additional years for use/disposal. This would be for a situation where a substance does not get renewal approval, but "where there is no alternative".

This proposal is opposed by MEPs such as S&D Sakis Arnaoutoglou (am. 682) and Stine Bosse, Martin Hojsík, Karin Karlsbro, and Michal Wiezik (Renew). Arnaoutoglou explains that "a total period of three years is excessive", and would "prolong exposure of farmers, consumers and ecosystems to products that no longer satisfy Union approval requirements".

Croplife however demanded that this longer grace period of up to three years apply as standard to most non-renewal cases, not only to those for which there was "no alternative". They say "extended grace periods (up to 12 months for sale and 24 months for use)

should apply systematically to all substances with a non-renewal decision, unless withdrawal is based on serious concerns for human health or environment protection.” In their pursuit of another three year free ride to keep selling, exposing people and the environment to a product that is no longer approved, they argued that it would “add complexity” to check whether a (less harmful) alternative is available.

Dorfmann and Picaro dutifully deleted this ‘absence of alternative’ condition. In their report, EU member states could grant (am. 30 and 31) a grace period of up to three years in total (unless there are “immediate and serious concerns for health or the environment”), regardless of whether a less harmful alternative exists.

The exact same change was proposed [in amendments tabled by](#) far-right MEPs Raffaele Stancanelli (Lega), Mireia Borrás Pabón and Jorge Buxadé Villalba (VOX) of Patriots for Europe (am. 666). The justification given for these proposals by these far-right MEPs, strikingly, mirrors the exact articulation of Croplife EU: “the period of grace should be extended to 3 years in all cases when withdrawing or amending authorisations for PPP as a result of the Regulation, avoiding vague definition as “reasonable means”.”

Lobby demand 5: Attack on EU ban on carcinogenic, hormone disrupting pesticides

The pesticide industry wouldn’t miss any opportunity to take aim at a core element of the 2009 EU pesticide legislation: the so-called “cut-off criteria” that bans any pesticide that has the potential to cause cancer, disrupt the hormone system, or be toxic to the reproductive system. For these hazardous substances, science has shown, and regulatory agencies around the world acknowledge, there is [no safe level of exposure](#).

Pesticides identified as containing such chemicals must be banned, because it is [scientifically established](#) that some chemicals do not have a safe exposure level. The chemical industry lobby, as well as the US government, have, however, for a long time fiercely opposed this ‘hazard-based approach’. They favour a ‘risk-based approach’, claiming that a safe level of exposure can always be established (“the dose makes the poison”).

[Bayer complained](#) about “a growing regulatory conservatism, with an increasing reliance on hazard-based criteria in EU decision-making for pesticide approvals. Substances are often prohibited purely because of their intrinsic properties, without adequately considering real-life exposure or the actual risk posed under realistic use conditions”. In an email to DG SANTE’s Klaus Berend, after the publication of Omnibus X, the [German chemical industry lobby VCI complained that](#) the Omnibus does not lead to “a meaningful shift away from the hazard-based approach”.

[Copa-Cogeca](#), in a letter to the cabinet of Commissioner for Industrial Strategy Séjourné just a few days before the launch of the Omnibus, echoed the chemical industry lobby’s mantra. It claimed that “due to an authorization system focusing rather on hazard than on risk, all the PPPs are disappearing one after the other”. [Thorsten Scheile, for the Industrie-verband Agrar \(IVA\)](#) from Germany (whose members include Bayer, BASF, Syngenta, Corteva and Yara), echoed the message: “our central concern is to modernise the authorisation process from a hazard to a more risk-based approach”.

While the Omnibus proposal does not change the cut-off criteria themselves, the abandonment of the renewal assessment, as well as the inability of Member States to use the latest scientific evidence, would make it significantly less likely that a pesticide would be banned if evidence emerged that it was carcinogenic or hormone disrupting, after first approval.

But the attack on the cut-off criteria is far from over, and is now making its way to the European Parliament.

MEPs and co-rapporteurs Dorfmann and Picaro (am.14) are attempting to dilute the hazard-based cut-off criteria - by suggesting that all substances can be approved based on a risk assessment that also takes into account risk mitigation measures. Assuming such measures work effectively might provide grounds to keep problematic pesticides on the market; but [as reported by Le Monde](#) in 2022, protective equipment for agricultural workers has in fact proven ineffective.

The German extreme right-wing party AfD is attempting to completely abandon the EU pesticide law principle that pesticides that can cause cancer or meet any of the other cut-off criteria should be banned – through [amendment 370](#), proposed by MEPs Ivan David, Anja Arndt, Volker Schnurrbusch, and party ideologue Marc Jongen. The AfD justifies this move by saying that “at least cut-off criteria set in [appendix II 3.6.2., 3.6.3., 3.6.4. , 3.6.5. and 3.7](#) need to be changed to real risks evaluation.”

This amendment by the far-right would allow pesticides that have mutagenic properties (3.6.2), can cause cancer (3.6.3), are toxic for the reproductive system (3.6.4), can disrupt the hormonal system (3.6.5) or that are a persistent organic pollutant (POP) to be used in fields, and thus end up in food. A nearly identical amendment has been tabled (am.368) by a group of MEPs from Le Pen’s far-right Rassemblement National (RN) in France, and the Spanish far-right party VOX (Mireia Borrás Pabón, Anne-Sophie Frigout, Gilles Pennelle, and Jorge Buxadé Villalba).

Box Don’t mention PFAS pesticides

Contamination of water, soil and air with until recently not-much-heard-of toxic PFAS-pesticides and related trifluoroacetic acid (TFA) is turning into a very hot issue. A September 2026 pre-print [academic publication shows](#) how TFA-pollution in Austrian groundwater has tripled in just five years. This could be linked to the use of PFAS-pesticides.

Widespread [PFAS-pollution is an issue that is broadly exposed](#), and the costs of cleanup – if it is even possible – are known to be staggering. Yet some German lobby groups, and even a government-linked actor, explicitly told the Commission to not add PFAS-pesticides to the list of cut-off criteria.

The Plant Protection Service of the North Rhine-Westphalia Chamber of Agriculture (Germany), “as a specialist stakehold-

er”, submitted a statement saying “there should be no further implementation of hazard-based approaches (e.g. PMT, PFAS)

in the authorisation process”. Is it a coincidence that North Rhine-Westphalia is the home-base of Bayer?

The farm lobby from Southern Germany [Bayerischen Bauernverband](#), as well as several groups of fruit producers, also echoed the same demand in nearly identical wording: “Other hazard-based approaches (e.g. PMT, PFAS) shall not be implemented.” It is unclear who drafted the original text. Joerg Hilbers, for the fruit producers lobby [Bundesfachgruppe Obstbau](#), said “no implementation of other hazard-based approaches (e.g. PMT, PFAS).” This was also repeated by the [Obstbauverband Sachsen & Sachsen-Anhalt](#), submitted by Carmen Kaps.

Another battleground: Lowering the residues of banned pesticides on im- ported food?

One proposal the Commission made in the Food and Feed Omnibus, however, did not charm industry. It attempted to lower, or even ban, the level of residues of EU-banned pesticides on imported food or other products. While this may sound like a step forwards, the proposal [was actually strongly criticised](#) by NGOs, who said it was “deeply insufficient in scope and largely symbolic”.

Nevertheless, the pesticide lobby opposed

any lowering of residues; even if that would help create a fairer playing field for farmers.

[BASF, for instance, opposed](#) the proposed Maximum Residue Level (MRL) changes, arguing that “fundamental changes to the MRL regime from a risk- to a hazard-based approach should not be addressed in this file and should, at a minimum, await a full impact assessment”. Croplife Europe [advanced](#) the same line. Bayer, in a meeting on 12 September 2025, [told the Commission](#) that “standards differ significantly at global level, so EU should exercise caution with mirror clauses”. But, in fact, these differences in standards are the very reason to bring in measures that aim to create a fairer situation for European farmers, by demanding that imported food meet the same safety standards as European food.

Lobby groups Cocal (cereal and oilseed traders), FEDIOL (oilseed crushers) and FEFAC (animal feed traders), all sectors that profit highly from cheap supplies from abroad, [immediately responded with a joint letter](#) that was leaked on 28 November 2025. They told Commissioner Hansen that they were “highly concerned about the elimination of import tolerances for certain substances not authorized in the EU”.

[\(See full story in Annex 1\).](#)

Farm lobby Copa-Cogeca instrumentalised by pesticide lobby – again.

In 2026, Copa-Cogeca openly joined forces with Croplife EU in organising a lobby event together. On the very hot 15 July, the lobbyists invited MEPs to come to the (doubtless air-conditioned) offices of Copa-Cogeca, to listen to speeches that drilled down the ‘empty toolbox’ narrative once more. This was followed, of course, by the usual cool drinks and networking opportunity.

Grilled Media obtained the presentations given at this event, which showed how the German farming organisation Deutsche Bauernverband (DBV) warned MEPs to ‘learn’ from the ban on neonicotinoid insecticides, and to avoid banning other substances in the future.

Neonicotinoids are known to be very harmful to pollinators and other insects. It was a huge battle to get some of those products banned and the ban has still not been properly im-

plemented. Industry [has a long track record](#) of defending their ‘licence to operate’, even when the impact on human health or crucial ecosystem functions – such as the loss of bees and other food crops pollinators – are at stake.

As Corporate Europe Observatory asked in [a July 2026 EU Observer](#) opinion piece - whose interests was Copa-Cogeca really defending here? The noise being made by this supposedly farmer friendly group - in tandem with the pesticide industry - is strikingly absent when it comes to addressing pesticide-related risks to farmers’ health, exemplified by the recognition of Parkinson’s as an occupational illness in several EU countries.

Corporate Europe Observatory previously reported how Croplife EU is [actively instrumentalising farmers’ anger](#) to pursue its anti-environmental lobby campaigns. While at the same time, the organisation pushes in favour of free trade agreements such as EU-MERCOSUR, which was a key concern of the 2025 farmers’ protests.

Meanwhile in the Council: member states divided

governments from France, Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands had “concerns regarding the Omnibus proposal for unlimited approvals but are willing to compromise if it applies only to a category of substances deemed “low-risk”.” This aspect was included in the latest proposal of the Irish Presidency. However, the approval periods for all other pesticides would still be extended by 15 years (first approvals) to 25 years (renewals).

The documents [also confirm](#) that EU countries are very divided over the proposed plan to lower pesticide residues on imported food for pesticides not authorised in the EU. The Irish proposal by and large follows the Commission’s Omnibus proposal, which means a lowering of health and environmental protection.

Environmental groups strongly denounced the Council position, adopted on 30 September 2026. “By extending approval periods, broadening derogations and prolonging grace periods, Member States are paving the way for continued use of hazardous pesticides that should no longer be authorized”, [said PAN-Europe](#).

The positions taken by EU country governments are always notoriously opaque. Consumer organisation Foodwatch [obtained and published](#) the Member State positions from May 2026. The documents showed that

Conclusion: Time to stop industry’s deregulation agenda

This report shows how the Commission’s Food and Feed Omnibus, and subsequent changes proposed by Parliament’s co-rapporteurs Herbert Dorfmann and Michele Picaro, have adopted key lobby demands from the pesticide industry. Omnibus X, if passed in this form, will keep farming

dependent on pesticide use ‘forever’.

The voices of pesticide producers Bayer and BASF, their lobby group Croplife Europe, and farming lobbies like Copa-Cogeca which seem increasingly captured by big industry, have been carefully listened to and their demands are now written into the proposals. Numerous far-right MEPs have submitted amendments that will jeopardise people’s health through harmful pesticide exposure. Undoubtedly this will obstruct the future development of a resilient environment that sustains food production.

Meanwhile the voices of citizens, scientists, and family farmers have been entirely ignored by Health Commissioner Oliver Varhelyi, who did not even order a proper impact assessment.

Instead of this industry-driven deregulation attempt, Omnibus X should be withdrawn and EU pesticide rules should be strengthened according to the latest science.

The Food and Feed Omnibus is a key example of why we urgently need a different approach to regulating harmful chemicals. A toxic-free politics approach to pesticide regulation would learn from the tobacco control arena, meaning that public authorities at the European, national, and regional levels would adopt lobby firewall measures to restrict the influence and access of pesticide corporations and their allies to decision-makers. Instead decision-making would then be based on independent science and the needs of people and planet. This would be an important step to set priorities in the right direction to serve the public interest, not just corporate profits.

Research and writing: **Nina Holland**

Editing: **Fleachta Phelan**

Design: **karenpaalman.com**

Thank you to Hans van Scharen and Marcella Via for their valuable input; and to Salomé Roynel and Angeliki Lysimachou at PAN-Europe for sharing their extensive knowledge and analysis of the Food and Feed Omnibus and all pesticide matters.

Published by Corporate Europe Observatory

Brussels, October 2026

Contents of this report may be quoted or reproduced for non-commercial purpose, provided that the source of information is acknowledged. Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) is a research and campaign group working to expose and challenge the disproportionate influence that corporations and their lobbyists exert over EU policy-making. CEO works in close alliance with public interest groups and social movements in and outside of Europe to develop alternatives to the dominance of corporate power.

www.corporateeurope.org

Corporate Europe Observatory is registered in the EU lobby transparency register under identification number 5353162366-85.