

# Experts call for overhaul of pesticide regulations

January 24 2020, by Bob Yirka

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A trio of researchers from Aarhus University, Agroscope, Wädenswil and Vetagro Sup, France, Marcy l'étoile has published a Policy Forum piece in the journal *Science* calling for an overhaul of the regulatory frameworks that define the ways that pesticides can be used. Christopher Topping, Annette Aldrich and Philippe Berny suggest that the current

system is outdated and needs to be changed because the current system is allowing more environmental damage than need be.

The authors note that most of the pesticide application regulations in place in Europe, the U.S. and many other countries were implemented in the early 1990s—a time when "one pesticide, one use" was the rule of thumb. Pesticides were tested on just one crop. But they note that conditions have changed. A single pesticide is often used on a wide variety of crops. They further note that our understanding of the impact of pesticides on the environment has changed, as well—much has been learned about the impact of pesticides on non-targeted insects, birds and other creatures. And much more has been learned about the impact on rivers, streams and even the oceans as pesticides make their way into the hydrologic cycle through runoff. They point out that over just the past 10 years, the failings of current risk assessments have shown the damage that pesticides are doing to the environment.

The authors acknowledge that changing an entrenched system of regulations across multiple countries would be a massive undertaking—but say it needs to take place nonetheless. They suggest the place to start would be targeting economic and legal systems. They note that changing regulations would not necessarily harm farmers economically—more stringent rules could prevent banning of pesticides across the board by pinpointing just those crops where a ban is needed. They also suggest work needs to be done to push pesticide [regulation](#) to the international level. They note that there are still major differences in regulations between countries—the European Union recently banned chlorpyrifos, for example, because it is linked to health problems in children—but the U.S. has allowed its use because the EPA did not agree with the assessment in Europe. An international ban would solve the problem.

The authors conclude by calling for an overhaul of the risk assessment

system and the establishment of another system that would allow for communicating pesticide risks to the public.

**More information:** C. J. Topping et al. Overhaul environmental risk assessment for pesticides, *Science* (2020). [DOI: 10.1126/science.aay1144](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aay1144)

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