



OPEN LETTER

on the discriminatory controls on pesticide residues, as well as systemic deficiencies in the monitoring of banned pesticides in Romania

February 17, 2026

To:

Romanian Presidency
Romanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
Romanian National Phytosanitary Authority - including for the attention of the Phytosanitary Police
Romanian Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests
Romanian National Environmental Guard
Romanian National Agency for Environment and Protected Areas
Romanian Ministry of Health
Romanian National Institute of Public Health
Romanian Prime Minister's Control Body
Parliament of Romania

For information:

European Commission - DG SANTE
European Parliament
Permanent Representation of Romania to the European Union
National Centre for Monitoring Community Environmental Risks

Esteemed institutions,

The Eco Ruralis Association – in support of ecological and traditional farmers and the ROMAPIS Federation of beekeepers from Romania address this open letter to you, in order to report serious structural dysfunctions in the organization and implementation of official controls on pesticide residues in Romania, as resulting from the analysis of the [National Phytosanitary Authority Report for 2025](#), in correlation with official data on the structure of national agriculture and with recent legal developments.

This intervention does not aim at a simple criticism of expediency, but highlights an issue of compliance with Romania's principles and obligations arising from European Union law, in particular regarding the proportionality, efficiency and risk-based nature of official controls in the field of food safety and the use of pesticides.

[Analysis of official data](#) indicates that, in 2025, the National Phytosanitary Authority analyzed 4,092 samples as part of official control, of which:

- Vegetables: 3,059 samples (≈74.8% of the total);

- Fruits: 914 samples ($\approx 22.3\%$);
- Cereals: only 119 samples ($\approx 2.9\%$).

Therefore, in 2025, over 97% of ANF's control activity is focused on a sector that represents less than 4% of Romania's agricultural area.

This distribution does not represent a correction of the [previously observed imbalance](#), but on the contrary, an accentuation of it, given that the vegetable sector ends up concentrating almost 75% of total controls.

Relating these data to the agricultural reality, leads to a conclusion that cannot be ignored: according to the data of the Ministry of Agriculture, the [cereal and technical plant sector](#) occupies approximately 6 million hectares, representing over 70% of Romania's arable land, while [vegetables are cultivated](#) on approximately 220,000 hectares, i.e. under 3%. However, the intensity of controls reported on the surface shows that approximately 1,360 controls are carried out per 100,000 hectares of vegetables, compared to approximately 2 controls on the same surface of cereals. **In concrete terms, a hectare of vegetables is almost 700 times more controlled than a hectare of cereal crops.**

Such a difference cannot be justified by methodological variations or administrative considerations, but reflects a systematic pattern of selective and discriminatory organization of controls, contrary to the principle of proportionality and the legal obligation that they be based on an objective and real assessment of risks.

The gravity of this situation is amplified in the context of the use of pesticides in Romania. For approximately 12 years, the Ministry of Agriculture has authorized, through successive derogations, the use of neonicotinoids – substances prohibited at European Union level due to their impact on pollinators, biodiversity and the environment, which even led to the initiation of an [infringement procedure against Romania](#). These derogations directly targeted corn and sunflower crops, that is, precisely those crops that dominate national agriculture and which, paradoxically, remain the least subject to controls.

The legal situation of these substances was decisively clarified in March 2025, when the Cluj Court of Appeal [ordered the suspension of the temporary authorizations for neonicotinoids](#), the decision being enforceable by law. In 2025, any use of these substances for treating corn and sunflower came under strict restrictions, with the obligation of the authorities to verify compliance with them.

However, the analysis of the ANF report for 2025 does not indicate any orientation of controls towards maize and sunflower crops. Moreover, sunflower is not included at all in the monitoring program, and the control of cereals remains superficial, both in terms of sample volume and statistical relevance. Under these conditions, it cannot be argued that there is a real mechanism for verifying compliance with the legal prohibitions on neonicotinoids. This gap is all the more problematic as cereals and technical plants represent the basis of the food chain and are widely used in current consumer products – from bakery and meat products to sauces and processed foods – being, in practice, difficult to avoid in daily nutrition. Consequently, the absence of adequate control on these crops raises serious questions about compliance with standards for the sustainable use of pesticides on millions of hectares that directly influence population exposure.

Moreover, the ANF data itself confirms the existence of a concrete risk in the cereal sector, by detecting residues of substances from the neonicotinoid category in the samples analyzed. However, these findings are not followed by an intensification of controls in the sectors concerned, which indicates a disconnect between risk assessment and administrative action.

It is also necessary to emphasize that the mission of the National Phytosanitary Authority is not limited to ensuring food safety, but explicitly includes environmental protection. In practice, however, the obligations regarding the protection of the environment and pollinators are insufficiently addressed, in the absence of effective field controls on the level of contamination of crops and the agricultural environment. This systemic omission has direct and serious consequences for the beekeeping sector, which disproportionately bears the effects of the intensive use of pesticides, in the absence of real control over the sources of contamination.

This situation has profound systemic implications. First, it creates a distorted picture of the sources of contamination, by over-exposing the vegetable sector, which is dominated by small and medium-sized farms, and under-representing the large-scale agricultural sector, which mainly grows cereals and industrial plants. Second, the lack of controls in sectors where pesticide use is most intensive and where exemptions have been granted for prohibited substances undermines the objectives of protecting public health and the environment. Third, the absence of traceability and field control mechanisms makes it impossible to effectively verify compliance with legal prohibitions, including those resulting from court decisions.

Under these conditions, the current control system cannot be considered efficient, credible or compliant with [the requirements of European Union law](#). Moreover, there are serious indications that the way controls are organised leads to the systematic avoidance of high-risk sectors and to a focus on categories of producers that do not represent the main source of the identified risks.

In light of the above, we believe that urgent institutional intervention is required, both at the national and European levels, to correct these dysfunctions and to ensure compliance of the control system with the legal obligations in force.

We specifically request the adoption of the following measures:

- 1. Revision of the National Program for Monitoring Pesticide Residues in Vegetables, Fruits and Cereals from Domestic Production in accordance with the provisions of Regulation (EC) No. 396/2005, for the year 2026 , so that the distribution of controls in Romania is based on the proportion of cultivated areas and on a real assessment of risks, including those associated with the use of prohibited pesticides.**
- 2. Explicit and prioritized inclusion of corn and sunflower crops in control plans, especially in the context of the historical and potentially illegal use of neonicotinoids.**
- 3. Requesting official and complete clarifications regarding the completion of the process (coordinated by ANF and MARD) of reviewing the *National Action Plan on reducing risks associated with the use of plant protection products* , including the publication of the final form and related documentation, given that the process carried out in 2025 was concluded in July in an abrupt and non-transparent manner, without informing the members of the working group designated to prepare the first version of the Plan.**
- 4. Developing a functional traceability system for pesticide-treated seeds and pesticide use, with inclusive institutional and citizen participation, allowing for the identification and sanctioning of illegal uses.**
- 5. Transparent and detailed publication of data on the controls carried out, including the criteria for selecting samples and their distribution by crops and regions.**
- 6. Notification and involvement of competent institutions, including the Government Control Body and the European Commission, in order to assess the compliance of the pesticide control system in Romania.**

This open letter represents a firm call for compliance with the principles of legality, proportionality and efficiency in the exercise of control powers, as well as for the real protection of public health, the environment and the general interest.

In the absence of rapid and effective corrective measures, there is a risk of perpetuating a control system that is not only ineffective, but also contributes to the maintenance of practices contrary to the rule of law, food safety and European Union law.

Respectfully,

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