



Cluj Court of Appeal annuls neonicotinoid exemptions after 12 years of abuses

A major victory for the rule of law, human health, the environment and the future of agriculture in Romania

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The Cluj Court of Appeal delivered a major ruling today, annulling the exemptions issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, substances banned in the European Union due to serious environmental and health risks (reference 1).

The organizations Eco Ruralis and ROMAPIS, representing communities of peasants and beekeepers in Romania, initiated this process against the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture, challenging the exemptions that allowed the use of prohibited substances that affect bees, pollinators, peasant agriculture and agroecology in Romania.

The court rejected all the exceptions invoked by the Ministry of Agriculture and the industrial farmers' associations that joined the ministry in this trial. The court unequivocally confirmed the legality of the action initiated by the Eco Ruralis Association and the Federation of Beekeeping Associations ROMAPIS, ordering the cancellation of authorizations no. 16895/05.12.2024, no. 16896/05.12.2024 and no. 16897/05.12.2024 (reference 2).

With today's decision, the Romanian justice system stopped 12 years of abuses committed by the Ministry of Agriculture and blocked the use of banned pesticides on 3 million hectares of arable land.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has abused national and European legislation for over 12 years, granting exceptional emergency authorizations annually between 2014 and 2025, without public consultation (reference 3). The total number of such authorizations amounts to 57, and the applicants claimed that it was necessary to use prohibited pesticides on 5 million hectares of arable land, for the treatment of cereal crops, sunflower and other technical crops (flex crops).

With this decision, the court confirms that the law is not optional and that the Ministry of Agriculture cannot arbitrarily authorize pesticides banned in the European Union. The same ministry that points the finger at non-EU countries who do not comply with European standards for the responsible use of pesticides.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture's own documents submitted to the trial, the economic agents planned to use neonicotinoids on approximately 3 million hectares cultivated with corn and sunflower — that is, over a third of Romania's approximately 8.3 million hectares of arable land. In the substantive debate, the Ministry of Agriculture claimed that the use of pesticides banned in the EU was of strategic importance for Romania.

Neonicotinoids are banned because they seriously impact the environment, primarily by affecting pollinating insects that are at the base of food chains, unbalancing ecosystems. But the harmful effects do not stop there, they destroy life in the soil, reach groundwater and from there into running waters and lakes. They are historical pesticides which, along with DDT, are found in nature decades after their last use. And they do not remain limited to agricultural crops and the environment, but reach the food chain, being indirectly present in basic products such as bakery products, vegetable oils, processed products, sausages or sauces, foods that are almost impossible to avoid in the daily diet. We recall that the results of a [CURS survey](#) from 2025 show that 89% of Romanian citizens are against the consumption of pesticides and against the use of pesticides banned by the EU by farmers.

A long, two-stage process

Today's result had a complex legal path, started more than a year ago and built into two distinct but complementary actions: the suspension and annulment of the exemptions.

It all started on December 13, 2024, when Eco Ruralis and ROMAPIS filed a preliminary complaint with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, requesting the revocation of their authorizations. In the absence of a response from the ministry, the two organizations decided to sue the ministry, notifying the Cluj Court of Appeal.

Given the urgency of the situation (these pesticides were to be used immediately in the spring seeding period), a two-stage legal strategy was adopted. The first stage aimed at urgently suspending the effects of the authorisations, in order to quickly stop the use of the substances, and the second stage aimed at their definitive cancellation. It is important to understand that these two actions, although linked to each other, are distinct procedures in administrative law and were tried separately.

Stage I – Suspension of exemptions

In the first action, the Cluj Court of Appeal [decided on March 18, 2025](#) to suspend the authorizations, an enforceable decision that should have stopped the use of neonicotinoids. The Romanian Ministry of Agriculture appealed this decision. At that time, the Minister himself, Mr. Ionuț Florin Barbu, published a [video message in the agricultural press and on social networks](#) urging farmers to use seeds treated with neonicotinoids, which the farmers had allegedly purchased by the date of the court decision, interpreting the law and the principle of the rule of law in a personal and subjective way.

In this logic of undermining the rule of law, in April 2025 the ministry also attempted an [unusual procedural action](#) at the High Court of Cassation and Justice of Romania, requesting that the decision of the Cluj Court of Appeal not be implemented. This action did not have the result desired by the ministry.

Subsequently, the appeal of the suspension case was heard at the High Court of Cassation and Justice, which [ordered a retrial](#) by the Cluj Court of Appeal, on procedural grounds.

Following the retrial, [the court rejected the request for suspension](#), on the grounds that the suspension is no longer useful many months after the exemptions expired, without analyzing their legality. Eco Ruralis and ROMAPIS are currently preparing an appeal against this solution, which will take the case to the fourth trial cycle on the suspension component.

Stage II – Cancellation of exemptions

In parallel with this first action, as early as March 12, 2025, Eco Ruralis and ROMAPIS filed the main action with the Cluj Court of Appeal, requesting the definitive annulment of the exemptions, even before the court ruled on the suspension.

This is the action that was finalized today, February 25, 2026, by the decision of the Cluj Court of Appeal to cancel the authorizations issued by the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry has the possibility to appeal, but the decision represents a clear confirmation, on the merits, of the illegality of these acts.

Infringement procedure

Against the backdrop of these disputes and [public statements](#) by the Minister of Agriculture that he would grant new exemptions for neonicotinoids, the European Commission launched, on 8 October 2025, [the infringement procedure](#) against Romania on the issue of neonicotinoids. Recently, on 23 February 2026, during a meeting of the Committee on Agriculture of the European Parliament, representatives of the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) [explained that Romania had informed](#) the Commission that it would no longer grant such exemptions.

Agriculture, bees and our common future

Today's decision goes far beyond a legal dispute and concerns the direction we choose to go as a society. It has direct implications for organic farming and agroecological practices, for the protection of pollinators (including bees), but also for the health of our soil, our waters and, ultimately, for the quality of the food we eat every day.

For years, beekeepers have been the first to feel the effects of pesticides, facing economic losses, imbalances in ecosystems and constant pressure on their activity. This legal action shows that protecting nature cannot remain the responsibility of a single category. It is a joint effort, which concerns peasants, farmers, beekeepers, consumers and institutions alike, because the future of agriculture and our food depends on the balance of these relationships.

Thanks to lawyer Dumitru Dobrev

Eco Ruralis and ROMAPIS would like to express their special thanks to lawyer Dumitru Dobrev for the exceptional professionalism, rigor and dedication demonstrated throughout this complex and lengthy process. His legal expertise was essential in a difficult endeavor, in which we often faced an obvious imbalance

of resources and influence, felt like a true David and Goliath-type power struggle. In a context where public institutions and major economic interests were aligned against this endeavor, the clarity of the legal strategy and the consistency in defending the principles of legality made the difference.

This victory is not only the result of a collective effort, but also of a solid legal defense, which demonstrated that the law can remain a real instrument of balance and justice, even in the most difficult cases.

"We want to be proud of Romania – a country that respects its citizens, the rule of law and the highest agri-food standards. We, the farmers, modestly consider ourselves allies of all those who want to eat healthy and live in a clean environment. We are here to learn together with the citizens how to be better and more responsible farmers."

Through this process we have tried to contribute to something bigger than ourselves: the right of everyone to clean food, a healthy environment and an agriculture that respects life. We encourage everyone who is directly or indirectly connected to food, from farmers, to processors and chefs, to consumers, teachers, moms and dads, young people and adults of all ages to get involved, to ask questions and demand transparency and accountability. The agri-food system concerns us all and can become fairer and healthier only if we participate in its democratization," says Ramona Duminicioiu, president of the Eco Ruralis Association.

"Beekeepers have fought an often solitary battle against pesticides for years, seeing first-hand the effects of these substances on bees and the natural balance. The fact that peasants have joined us and that we have acted together is a strong sign that solidarity can change things."

Pollinators are not just a category of interest – they are the foundation of agriculture and life. Without them, there is no sustainable agricultural production, no biodiversity, no future. Today's court decision gives us hope and confidence that when we come together, we can protect what is essential for all.

We invite everyone who is concerned about health, the environment and food quality to join us. Every voice counts. Together we can build an agri-food system that respects nature, supports communities and provides security for future generations," says Constantin Dobrescu, vice president of the ROMAPIS Beekeeping Federation.

For more information, please contact us:

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References:

Reference 1: Cluj Court of Appeal file no. 182/22/2025. Subject of the case: annulment of administrative act. Access - <https://www.curteadeapelcluj.ro/index.php/dosare/info-dosar.html>

Reference 2. Derogations repealed:

- Authorization no. 16895/05.12.2024 for the emergency use of the product CRUISER 350 FS for the treatment of corn and sunflower seeds; https://www.ecoruralis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/cruiser_350_fs_2025.pdf
- Authorization No. 16896/05.12.2024 for the emergency use of the product NUPRID AL 600 FS for the treatment of corn and sunflower seeds; https://www.ecoruralis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/nuprid_al_600_fs_2025.pdf
- Authorization No. 16897/05.12.2024 for the emergency use of the product PICUS 600 FS for the treatment of corn and sunflower seeds. https://www.ecoruralis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/picus_600_fs_2025.pdf

Reference 3. Emergency authorizations (exemptions) granted by the Ministry of Agriculture of Romania, for the use of neonicotinoid pesticides banned in the EU, during the period 2014-2025:

- Between 2018 and 2025, official data published by the National Phytosanitary Authority shows that the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development granted 39 emergency authorizations for the use of neonicotinoid-based pesticides. Source: temporary, emergency authorizations – published by the National Phytosanitary Authority, see the list of authorizations for the products NUPRID, CRUISER, PICUS, PONCHO, YUNTA: <https://anfd.ro/omologare/autorizatii-de-urgenta/>
- In the period 2016-2024, Romania reported to the European Commission 50 emergency authorisations for the use of neonicotinoid pesticides. Source: database, emergency authorisations, European Commission – Food Safety / Plants / Pesticides – see the list of emergency authorisations notified by Romania, active substances: Clothianidin, Thiamethoxam, Imidacloprid: <https://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/pesticides/eu-pesticides-database/ppp/screen/home>
- In addition to these official records, we inform you of the existence of at least 4 emergency authorizations for neonicotinoid-based pesticides (attached), from the period 2014-2015. Source: Ministry of Agriculture, information obtained under Law 544/2001.
- By superimposing this official data, it results that during the period 2014-2025 the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development issued a total of at least 57 emergency authorizations for pesticides in this class (neonicotinoids) in Romania.