

Pesticides in Scotland

Pesticides are chemicals designed to kill insects, rodents, molluscs, fungi and plants. They are mainly used in agriculture, our towns and gardens.

Pesticides can be toxic to people and the environment.

The area of land treated by pesticides, the frequency of applications and the toxicity of some pesticides (insecticides) have greatly increased.

Am I at risk?

Yes. We are exposed to pesticides through our air, water and food. Farmers, agricultural workers and their families can suffer frequent exposure and have a higher rate of pesticide-related ill health.

Can pesticides affect my health?

Yes. Pesticides can contribute to cancers, thyroid disorders, neurological diseases like Parkinson's and neuropsychological disorders like depression.²

Pregnant mothers and children are particularly sensitive as exposure to pesticides can cause problems in reproductive health and increase the chance of childhood cancers, neuro-developmental issues and other disorders.^{3,4}



99% of pesticides are made from fossil fuels and contribute to the climate emergency throughout their lifecycle.¹

Do they harm the environment?

Yes. Pesticides can contaminate soil, water, and air. Pesticides have been linked to declines in bees and pollinators, birds, mammals, aquatic animals and non-target plants.⁵ Worms and microorganisms in soil can be poisoned which affects soil fertility. This can lead to a large decline in food production.⁶

Can we reduce the use of pesticides?

Yes. We can all reduce or stop using pesticides in our homes and gardens. Hundreds of farmers and towns globally have successfully stopped using them - helping nature and the climate.^{7,8}

What is the Scottish Government doing about pesticides?

The main legislation on pesticides comes from the European Union Directive on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides 2009/128/EC.

However, the UK is falling behind EU pesticide standards allowing 36 that are now banned in EU countries. The United Nations considers 13 of these 36 to be highly hazardous to human health and the environment.⁹

We all have the right to
NON-TOXIC ENVIRONMENTS TO LIVE, WORK, STUDY AND PLAY

Get involved

Campaign against pesticide use:

Pesticides Action Network - UK

Buglife against pesticides

The Scottish Government has the devolved powers to improve regulations on pesticides but has not acted in this area.

What can I do if I have a concern?

Contact our Rights Officer to talk more at rights@ercs.scot

Contact our free legal advice service at www.ercs.scot/get-advice

Call our office on **0131 358 0038** or freephone on **0800 861 1738**

¹ Pesticide Action Network UK (10 Aug 2023) [99% of pesticides are made from fossil fuels](#)

² EDP Sciences. (2022) [Effects of pesticides on health: New data](#)

³ Jain et al. (2023) [Associations between high levels pesticide and adverse reproductive outcomes in females: A comprehensive review](#)

⁴ Fucic et al. (2021) [Reproductive Health Risks Associated with Occupational and Environmental Exposure to Pesticides](#)

⁵ Task Force on Systemic Pesticides (2015) [Worldwide integrated assessment on systemic pesticides](#)

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Lechenet et al. (2017) [Reducing pesticide use while preserving crop productivity and profitability on arable farms](#)

⁸ Pecenka et al. (2021) [IPM reduces insecticide applications by 95% while maintaining or enhancing crop yields through wild pollinator conservation](#)

⁹ Pesticide Action Network UK (13 Sept 2023), [UK falling behind EU pesticide standards](#)