

How should the European Green Deal affect EU agri-food trade? An Agroecology perspective

Civil Dialogue Group
11 April 2024



Presentation of Agroecology Europe

Agroecology Europe is the European association promoting the transition towards agroecology-based sustainable farming and food systems as a set of practices, a science and a movement across Europe and throughout the world, by facilitating knowledge sharing and action.

More than 300
members from 15
countries

Established in 2016 to
support the agroecological
transition in Europe



Aims to analyse, design, develop
and promote the transition towards
agroecology-based farming and
food systems

NGOs, Universities, Scientists,
Students, PHD students, farmers,
social movements, etc.

Intends to place agroecology
high on the EU agenda

Foster interactions between
actors in science, practice
and social movements

Our Networks and Partners

Advocacy and Campaigning



**EU FOOD
POLICY
COALITION**

Task Force Agroecology



International Coalition



AGROECOLOGY COALITION

The coalition for the transformation of food systems through agroecology

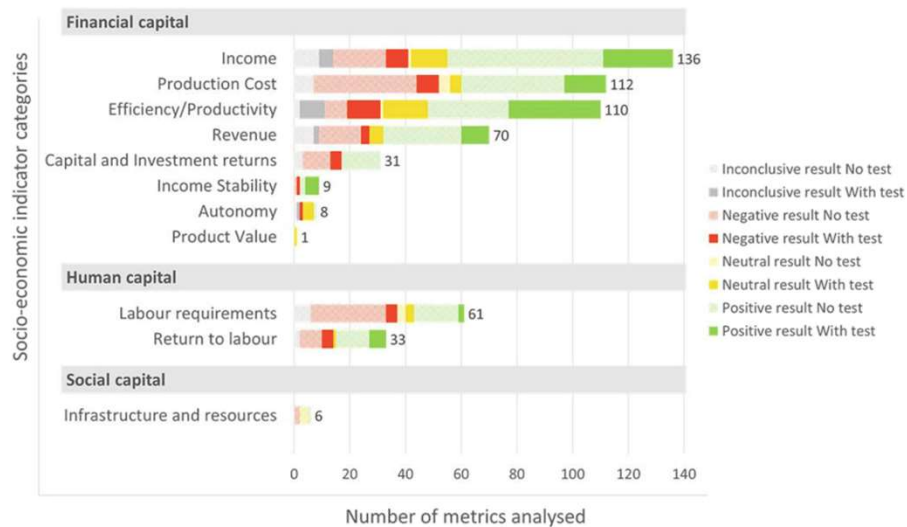
Research Interfaces



Horizon Europe Research Project



Agroecology Europe: co-creating scientific and practical knowledge to support consistent public policies for EU agrifood systems



Mouratiadou, I. & Wezel, A. & Kamilia, Kintan & Marchetti, Angelica & Paracchini, Maria-Luisa & Bàrberi, Paolo. (2024). **The socio-economic performance of agroecology. A review.** *Agronomy for Sustainable Development*. 44.



Advances in Agronomy

Volume 178, 2023, Pages 1-59

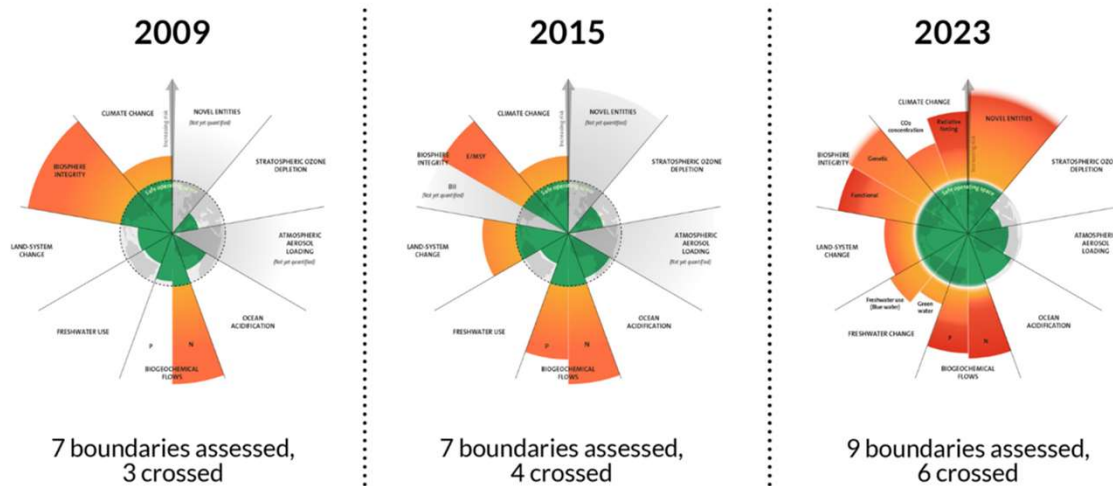


Chapter One - Agroecological crop protection for sustainable agriculture

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Redefining Sustainability: Breaking the Status Quo to Avert Environmental, Economic, and Systemic Failures

Planetary boundaries



- **Planetary Boundaries at Risk:** Our food systems are pushing beyond planetary boundaries, **jeopardizing crucial net productive assets.**
- **The longer we stay in the red zone,** the poorer we will be as we destroy vital ecosystemic services.

Source: Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University. Based on Richardson et al. 2023, Steffen et al. 2015, and Rockström et al. 2009

Redefining Sustainability: Breaking the Status Quo to Avert Environmental, Economic, and Systemic Failures

What are ecosystem services?

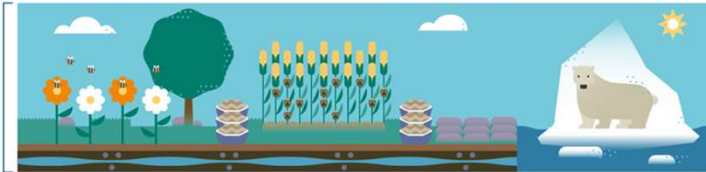
Nature provides us with many valuable services. Some of these services are relatively easy to quantify, such as crops, fisheries and timber; other services, less so. How does one accurately account for the value of pollination for agriculture or flood protection by wetlands?

Provisioning services



- Crops, soil fertility
- Livestock
- Timber
- Fiber
- Wild foods (e.g. mushrooms, berries, etc.)
- Fisheries
- Genetic resources, medicines
- Fresh water
- Clean air

Regulating services



- Pollination
- Temperature regulation
- Carbon sequestration and storage
- Pest regulation
- Erosion regulation
- Flood regulation
- Water purification
- Air purification

Cultural services



- Recreation (e.g. swimming, hiking, skiing etc.)
- Aesthetic (e.g. sceneries)
- Cultural identity

Find out more: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/biodiversity/intro>

- **Economic Value of Ecosystem Services:** In 2019, the European Union witnessed an estimated economic value of **EUR 234 billion** from diverse ecosystem services.
- **This value is comparable to the gross value added of agriculture and forestry combined** and amounts 4.5 times the annual budget of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). (Source: Vysna et al. 2021)

The background image is a scenic landscape of a valley. In the foreground, there are green fields and a small stream. In the middle ground, there are several small wooden buildings and a few trees. In the background, there are forested mountains with some clouds or mist. The overall scene is peaceful and rural.

European Green Deal and EU agri-food trade:

**Ensuring coherence between the European Green Deal
and other EU policies related to agriculture, trade,
environment, health and climate to achieve synergies and
avoid conflicting objectives.**

The purpose of Agri-Food Trade

→ **The Comparative Advantages Theory alone is not fit for resilient agrifood systems:**

- ◆ By essence, international trade means specialization, intensification and expansion in production scale to generate the **intended benefits**.
- ◆ These expected benefits **should be compared** with the **negative impacts** of specialization, intensification, and large-scale production on the erosion of our productive (natural) capital as soil fertility, biodiversity, water, etc...
- ◆ It contributes to a rapid **decline of agrobiodiversity** with only 9 plant species accounting for 66% of total crop production

The purpose of Agri-Food Trade

→ Relocalize food production and Reevaluate Agri-food Trade Objectives:

- ◆ To enhance food systems' resilience amidst **climatic, and geopolitical challenges**, relocalization of food production should prevail thereby fostering adaptability and sustainability at regional levels.
- ◆ Furthermore, trade should **contribute to enhance food security** within the EU and globally. **Trade should focus on importation strategies** to prioritize goods that cannot feasibly be produced within local contexts, ensuring a balance between self-sufficiency and global interdependence.
- ◆ On the contrary, the EU has increasingly adopted an export-oriented strategy for agrifood products and trade between the EU and other countries has intensified in terms of both imports and exports. The balance of 6% of meat production exported is thus explained by an export share of production standing at 40%, whereas the equivalent of 35% is imported (Poux and Aubert, 2019).
- ◆ **The European food system is a net importer of agricultural land and calories.** In other words, it is the world that feeds Europe rather than the other way round, as is often claimed (Witzke & Noleppa, 2010)

Action 1: Align EU trade policies with the EU Green Deal objectives: ensuring consistency and ending double standards

- EU can boast higher standards of sustainability and integrate corrective measures to safeguard agrobiodiversity, public health and ecosystem services.
- Implement **Non-Tariff Measures such as mirror clauses** that reflect the objectives of the EU Green Deal and consistency of EU international commitments (Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Paris Agreement, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework).
- Example of Pesticides:
 - ◆ **End the exports of banned hazardous chemicals**
 - ◆ In 2018, more than 81,000 tonnes of pesticides containing 41 different hazardous chemicals banned on EU fields, have been exported from European factories for use in agriculture in other countries
 - ◆ **The main export destinations for these banned pesticides are countries that are the biggest exporters of agrifood products to the EU.** Like a boomerang, banned pesticides find their way back to European consumers via imported food, thus ending up on the dinner plates of EU citizens

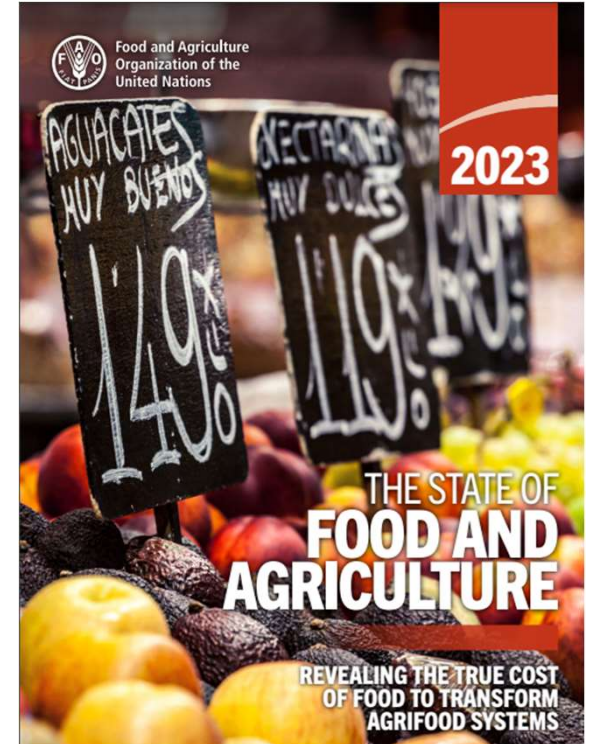
- The EU already includes biodiversity-related non-trade provisions in trade agreements, but **these provisions are not legally binding and hardly effective.**
- More binding mechanisms, along with transparent and automatic sanctions in case of non-compliance should be considered.
- There are tensions and discrepancies associated with the negotiation of the agricultural aspects of free trade agreements with Canada or MERCOSUR (see, for example, Hübner et al., 2017)

Trade and Biodiversity



Action 2: Improve impact assessment of Trade Agreements with True Cost Accounting

- Transitioning from traditional trade impact assessments to **True Cost Accounting**, which meticulously evaluates and incorporates social, health, and environmental costs associated with intensive agricultural products. This approach emphasizes the true cost of labor, human health implications, soil fertility loss, nitrates in water, and carbon and methane emissions, etc.
- **Embracing European Sustainability Reporting Standards** (ESRS) for non-financial reporting, elevating transparency and accountability in assessing ecological footprints and social impacts beyond mere economic metrics.
- Shifting the paradigm towards holistic evaluation methods like True Cost Accounting is essential for fostering sustainable practices that consider the broader implications of economic activities on society and the environment.



FAO. 2023. The State of Food and Agriculture 2023 – Revealing the true cost of food to transform agrifood systems. Rome

Action 3: Incentivise and develop diversified territorial agrifood systems

- Facilitate the transition towards a **circular economy model** within the agri-food sector, emphasizing waste reduction, efficient resource use, diversification at territorial level
- Grant market access to small and medium scale farmers and seek economic sustainability through more diversification
- Promote local varieties along with protection of traditional knowledge to create incentives to diversify production system and **increase food systems resilience and sustainability**
- **Improve farmers' relative position in value-chains** to increase incomes and economic viability



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Thank you a lot for your attention

Agroecology Europe (AEEU)

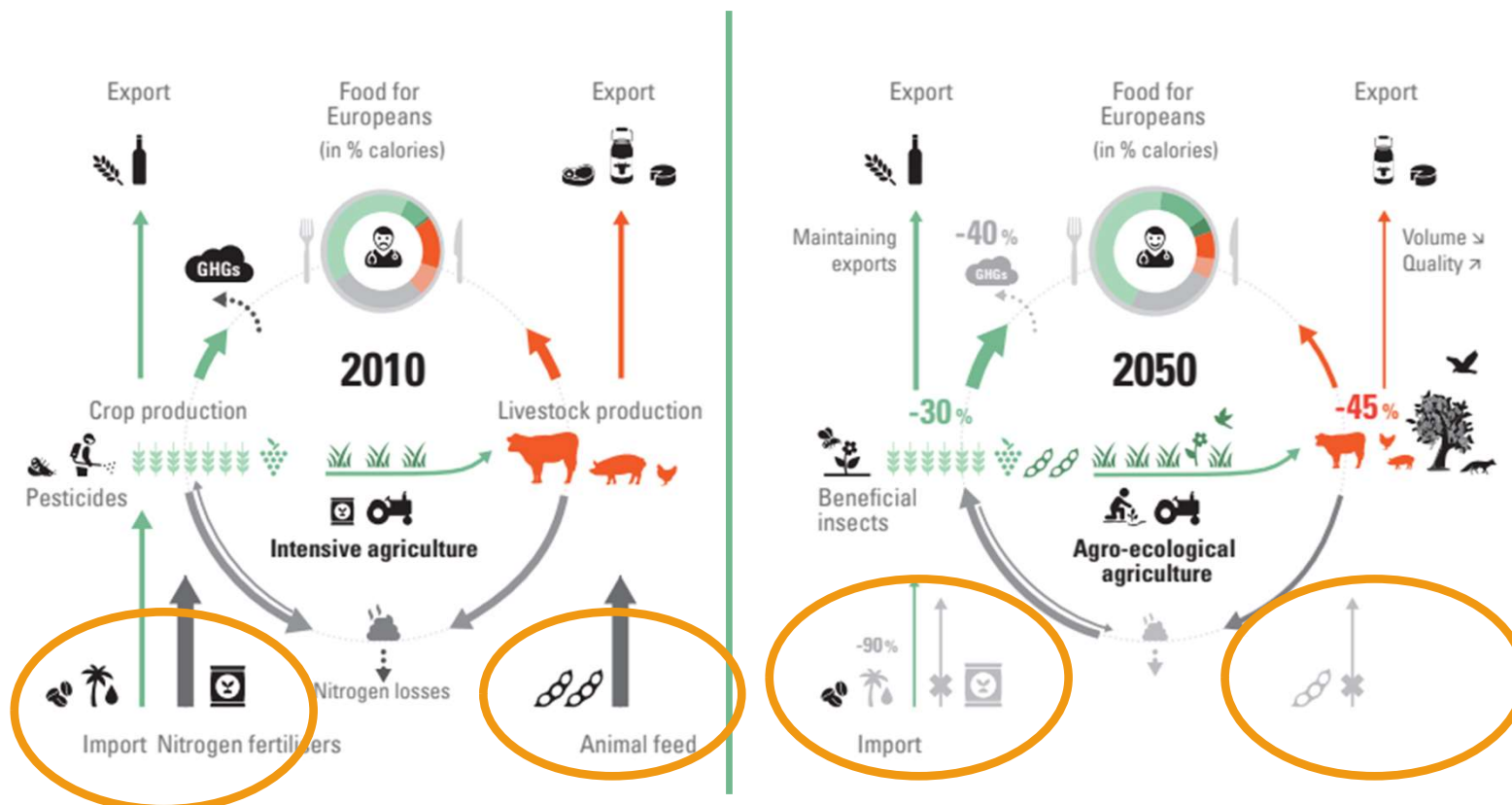
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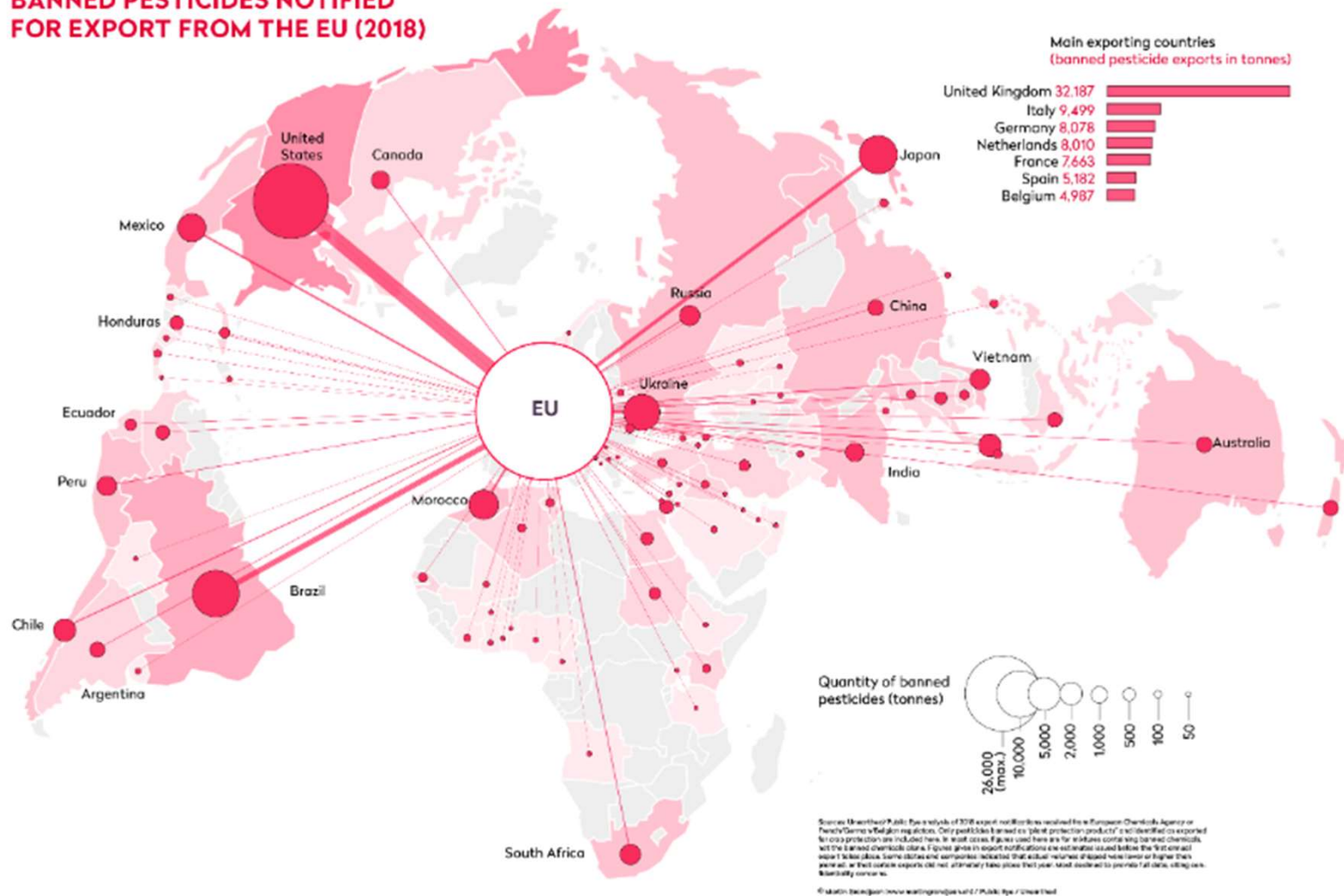
Agroecology
Europe

TYFA : A SCENARIO FOR AN AGRO-ECOLOGICAL EUROPE IN 2050

Source: Poux X. & Aubert P.-M. 2018. An agroecological Europe in 2050: multifunctional agriculture for healthy eating. Findings from the Ten Years For Agroecology (TYFA) modeling exercise. IDDRI Study 09/18: 74 pp



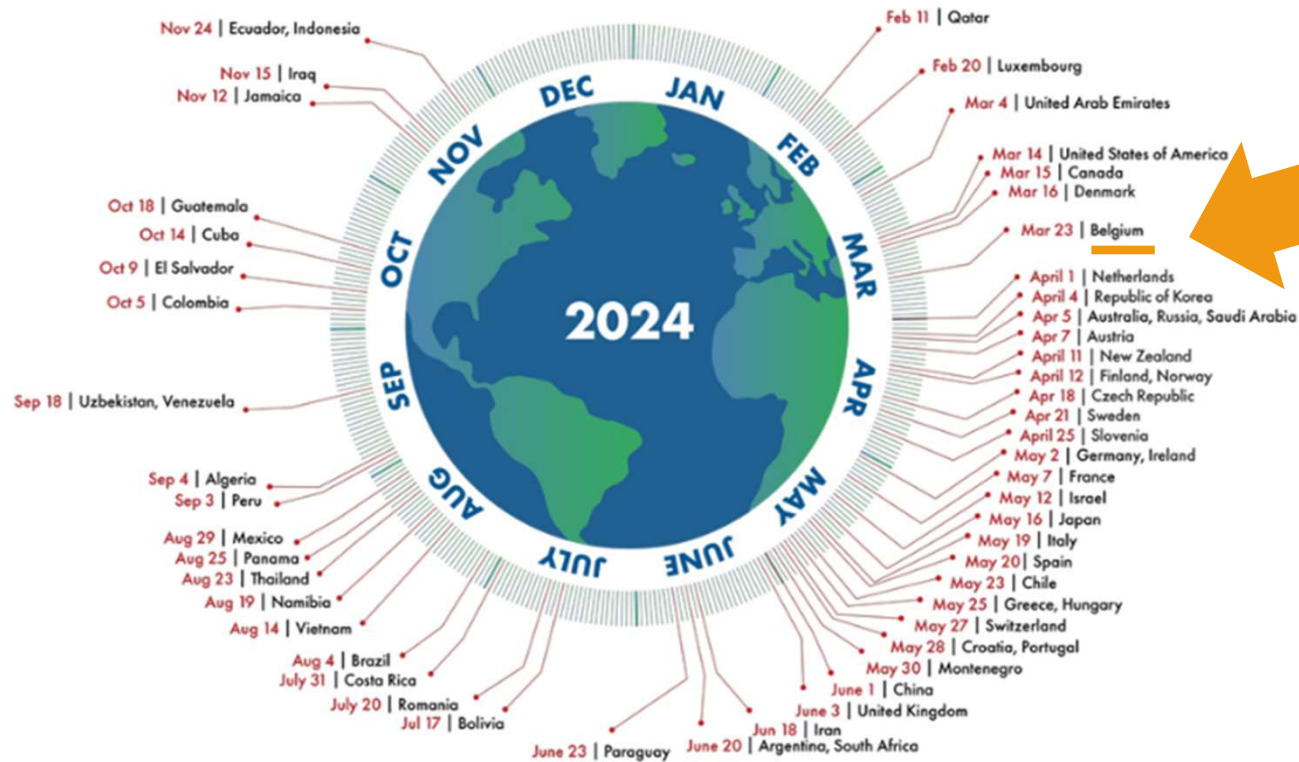
BANNED PESTICIDES NOTIFIED FOR EXPORT FROM THE EU (2018)



Source: Unearthed/Public Eye analysis of 2018 export notifications received from European Chemicals Agency or French/German/Belgian regulators.
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Country Overshoot Days 2024

When would Earth Overshoot Day land if the world's population lived like...



For a full list of countries, visit overshootday.org/country-overshoot-days.



EARTH
OVERSHOOT
DAY

Source: National Footprint and Biocapacity Accounts, 2023 Edition
data.footprintnetwork.org



Global Footprint Network
Advancing the Science of Sustainability