

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 (LONDON GMT) ON THURSDAY 14th NOVEMBER

UK's biggest supermarkets urged to end use of neonicotinoids and other bee-toxic pesticides

Campaigners issue demand as top ten UK supermarkets ranked on efforts to protect consumers, farmworkers and wildlife from pesticides

All of the UK's ten largest supermarkets continue to use neonicotinoids and other highly bee-toxic pesticides in their global supply chains. While acknowledging that some supermarkets are doing far better than others, PAN UK's 2024 ranking – which launched today – names “*protecting bees and other pollinators from pesticides*” as one of the key areas in which the entire sector urgently needs to improve.**(1)**

Josie Cohen from Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN UK) said, “*Given that three-quarters of crops rely on pollination, the catastrophic decline in global insect populations seen in recent years not only threatens ecosystems but also our own food security.***(2)** *Neonicotinoids and many other bee-toxic pesticides are banned in the UK and EU, where farmers prove every day that it's possible to grow food without them. If supermarkets want to protect food supplies and reduce their impact on nature, they should commit to ending the use of all highly bee-toxic pesticides throughout their global supply chains by 2030 at the very latest. Nature does not have time to wait.*”

PAN UK ranked supermarkets on six areas aimed at tackling pesticide harms.**(3)** These include the support offered to suppliers to adopt non-chemical alternatives and efforts to phase out chemicals that pose a particular risk to farmworkers' health. Despite being critical of the supermarket sector as a whole, the ranking clearly reveals that some companies are doing far more than others to tackle pesticide harms. M&S and Waitrose were found to be very much ‘leading the way’.

PAN UK 2024 Supermarket Ranking

1st	M&S and Waitrose	Leading the way
3rd	Coop	Making good progress
4th	Morrisons	Making good progress
5th	Sainsbury's	Making good progress
6th	Tesco	Could do better
7th	Asda	Could do better
8th	Lidl	Could do better
9th	Aldi	Lagging behind
10th	Iceland	Lagging behind

While most supermarkets have made progress since PAN UK's previous supermarket ranking in 2021, this year's ranking order remains largely unchanged with M&S, Waitrose, Co-op, Tesco, Aldi and Iceland all maintaining their positions. Morrisons and

Asda each improved their rank by one spot while Sainsbury's and Lidl both dropped a place, largely due to other supermarkets moving further and faster.

Cohen added, *“The gap is growing between the supermarkets at the top and bottom of the ranking. While all supermarkets could be doing more, those near the bottom of the table urgently need to step up their efforts to protect human health and the environment from pesticides. As shown by the retailers leading the way, it is entirely possible to remain profitable while taking action to reduce pesticide harms.”*

On top of phasing out bee-toxic pesticides from their global supply chains, PAN UK has also identified two quick wins that would help protect wildlife closer to home. All supermarkets continue to use pesticides, mostly weedkillers, around their stores and car parks. While the majority of supermarkets are now running trials of non-chemical alternatives, not one has yet taken the plunge and gone pesticide-free.

Supermarkets are also being urged to stop selling harmful pesticide products (such as garden weedkillers and pet tick and flea treatments), a move hugely popular with the public who have sent 75,000 emails calling for this in recent years. Co-op, Waitrose and Lidl responded by removing these products from their shelves, but Asda, Aldi, Morrisons, Sainsbury's and Tesco urgently need to follow suit for the sake of UK biodiversity.**(4)**

The ranking also highlights areas where the UK supermarket sector has made progress over the past three years, including:

- All supermarkets (but Iceland) now have lists of pesticides that are particularly harmful for human health or the environment which they monitor, restrict or prohibit from use within their global supply chains.
- To better protect consumers, all supermarkets have increased the range of food they test for residues. Since chemicals can become more harmful when combined, five of the top ten (Co-op, Lidl, M&S, Morrisons and Waitrose) now take action if the residues of more than five different pesticides are found on one food item.
- The sector has become far more transparent about pesticides. Four of the top ten (Co-op, M&S, Morrisons and Waitrose) now publish detailed results from their residue testing programmes, enabling their customers to make informed shopping decisions to avoid buying produce most likely to contain pesticides.**(5)**

“It is great to see some of the progress made by the UK supermarket sector in the past three years based on our advice”, said Cohen. “With their sprawling supply chains, supermarkets have the potential to influence efforts to tackle pesticides, not only in the UK but globally. We all need to pull together to tackle the current climate and nature crises. Supermarkets have a key role to play by banning the most toxic pesticides and supporting their supplier to adopt sustainable alternatives.”

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NOTES TO EDITOR:

- (1) PAN UK's 2024 supermarket ranking is available (post-embargo) at:
<https://www.pan-uk.org/supermarkets/>
- (2) Breeze et al, "Economic Benefits of Pollination to Global Food Systems – Evidence and Knowledge Gaps: Final Report" (2022): <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NERC-281022-EconomicBenefitsPollinationGlobalFoodSystems-FullReport.pdf>
- (3) The six topics covered by PAN UK's 2024 supermarket ranking are:
 - Protecting bees and other pollinators from pesticides
 - Phasing out Highly Hazardous Pesticides (including those that pose the greatest risk to farmworkers' health)
 - Supporting suppliers to use non-chemical alternatives to pesticides
 - Reducing pesticide residues in food
 - Selling pesticide products
 - Being transparent about pesticides
- (4) Iceland and M&S do not have gardening or pet ranges, so are not ranked by PAN UK on the topic "Selling pesticide products".
- (5) Four supermarkets publish detailed results from their pesticide residue testing programmes. Their results can be found at:
 - Co-op: <https://www.coop.co.uk/sustainability/responsible-sourcing/crop-protection> (see links under heading 'Data Transparency')
 - M&S: <https://corporate.marksandspencer.com/sustainability/our-products/agriculture-and-supporting-our-farmers>
 - Morrisons: <https://www.morrisons-corporate.com/globalassets/corporatesite/sustainability/morrisons-fresh-produce-pesticide-policy-2024-v3---google-docs.pdf> (see Annex 2)
 - Waitrose:
<https://www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/content/dam/cws/pdfs/Juniper/ethics-and-sustainability/Report/Waitrose-Pesticide-Residue-Testing-Report-2023.pdf>