

SUMMARY

EXPPERT SURVEY 5: PESTICIDES THAT ARE BANNED OR SUSPECTED TO BE ENDOCRINE DISRUPTERS ARE FOUND IN GREEN SALADS

The worrying results of our survey show the need for rapid implementation of the European Regulation on pesticides and the French National Strategy on endocrine disrupters.

EXPPERT investigation

To demonstrate the urgent need for strong, preventive action in the field of endocrine disrupters, Generations Futures has launched a series of reports on these chemical substances, which threaten the development of the fetus and young children even at low doses. These reports are based on detailed testing and analysis to show the many, omnipresent endocrine disrupting pesticides in our environment causing significant human exposure. Green salad (lettuces, rocket/rucola, etc) is the fourth most highly consumed vegetable in France with households consuming 5kg per year, according to data from INSEE, a leading national statistical institute in France. Considered a "health" food, many brochures from INPES (1) recommend consumption, especially during pregnancy and childhood (2). Generations Future fully supports these recommendations.

Green salad is subject to specific monitoring for the presence of certain chemical substances. Existing findings show that green salad is among the vegetables with the highest pesticide residues. The DGCCRF (3) monitoring plan published in 2013 showed that pesticide residues were present in almost 58% of samples tested. Moreover, according to EFSA (4) - the European Food Safety Authority, 36% of lettuce contains between two and 13 different residues. Many of the residues EFSA commonly finds in lettuces are suspected endocrine disrupters, such as propamocarb and iprodione. These troubling data led us to want to know more about the presence of pesticides in salads in France, and especially about those pesticides suspected of being endocrine disrupters.

Results: Many endocrine disrupters found

Thirty-one samples of different green salads (lettuce, curly salad, rocket, etc.) were purchased in supermarkets in the Oise and in the Somme regions of Picardy between 28 May and 21 July 2015. The amount of samples at 31 is bigger than the representative threshold sample size of 30 which DGCCRF commonly uses.

Below are some of the condensed findings which are further elaborated in our full report.

- The green salads tested each contain an average of almost four pesticides residues. (5)

- Of the 31 samples analysed, 80.65% contain at least one pesticide residue (25/31) – not including any residue of methyl bromide (as its origin may be natural rather than from a pesticide).
- On average, the samples each contain more than two residues of endocrine disrupting pesticides (average: 2.09).
- 67,74% of the samples contain at least one residue of an endocrine disrupting pesticide (21/31).
- Among the 10 active ingredients most frequently found, seven are suspected to be endocrine disrupters.

Prohibited products

Five samples (16.13% of total sample) contain one or more prohibited active substances (two samples or 6.45% of the total) or contain an active substance prohibited in salad cultivation in France (three samples or 9.67% of the total). Of these latter three samples, one sample even contains two substances prohibited for use in salad cultivation in France (mandipropamid and imidacloprid).

"We are warning our leaders of the need to take immediate and strong measures to reduce people's exposure to pesticides, and especially those suspected of being endocrine disrupters. We expect them to compel Europe to rapidly implement the decisions taken as part of the European Regulation 1107/2009, which prohibits putting endocrine disrupting pesticides on the market," says François Veillerette, spokesperson for Generations Futures.

"In addition, it is unacceptable that pesticides which are banned in Europe or prohibited in the cultivation of salad in France are present in over 16% of the samples tested. Again, we expect strong government action to quickly put an end to this situation – both in the cultivation of salads and all the other crops," he adds.

*French abbreviation for "Exposure to endocrine disrupters"

1 France's National Institute of Prevention and Education for Health

2 <http://www.inpes.sante.fr/CFESBases/catalogue/pdf/1387.pdf> and <http://www.inpes.sante.fr/CFESBases/catalogue/pdf/1059.pdf>

3 Directorate General for Competition, Consumption and Repression of Fraud, France

4 European Union report on pesticide residues in food (2013), EFSA Journal 2015; 13 (3): 4038. page 55. Available at: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/4038>

5 The precise figure is an average of 3.77 residues (not including methyl bromide). With methyl bromide, the average is 4.38.