

Europe's struggle against the health threat posed by pesticides

Voice-over 1:

Since the 1960s pesticides have helped increase crop productivity threefold. Now, ever more complex and dangerous agents are being used to combat pests, and in ever higher doses.

But high residues of pesticides in fruit and vegetables may also increase the risk of cancer in humans. Recent studies warn of the long-term risks for our society, as intellect in children is proven to suffer from poisonous substances during a pregnancy. The European Parliament is debating how pesticide procedures could be harmonised.

MEP Hiltrud Breyer is visiting a laboratory to measure residues in farm products. In addition to dangerously high levels, the samples show more and more "cocktails" of substances, which have unknown effects. Breyer has clear ideas for new legislation.

Voice-over 2:

I want fruit and vegetables to stop being poisonous traps for European consumers. Apart from a ban on substances that are harmful to the environment, I want substances that can cause cancer, or endanger genetic and reproductive processes, and those that damage the brain or the immune system, to be shown the red card. For the sake of health and consumer protection throughout Europe.

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This laboratory can identify 1200 different pesticides. However, certain contaminated products have already been consumed by the public before alarming test results emerge. This is where a passport for pesticides, including exact information about the substances used, could help to provide transparency.

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