

Research into the effects of pesticides

Voice-over 1:

Scientific research warns of unknown long-term effects of exposure to pesticides. Research at the University of Southern Denmark is examining possible developmental dysfunctions in children of local greenhouse workers. Professor Philippe Grandjean is an expert in environmental medicine. He is looking at the brain functions of children who've been exposed to poisonous substances. In a previous study of ninety pesticides and 200 chemicals on the development of an infant's brain, autism, hyperactivity, mental disability and a lower IQ are just some of the symptoms he's identified. Yet, the new E.U. legislation on chemicals, REACH, fails to recognise this.

Philippe Grandjean:

What we're talking about is a pandemic that is essentially affecting millions and millions of children worldwide, because they're exposed to lead, mercury, er, certain solvents like toluene, arsenic, er, various pesticides, other industrial chemicals and all these exposures are, each of them, they are just taking off a little bit of brain function, and they're not causing frank disease as such, because then it would be easy to see for the physicians; they would make all of these diagnoses: "Oh, this is a typical er, pesticide poisoning". No, what's happening is that the brain development is inhibited and therefore the brain that these children end up with is deficient, so that they are not functioning as well as they could have done.

Future generations will pay a price, a very serious price for the small benefits that we have gained from the short-term use of pesticides now.

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Whether Europe succeeds in protecting future generations with a long-term policy on pesticides remains to be seen. Hiltrud Breyer's report on pesticides will go before the European Parliament within the next few months.

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