

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: EU Proposes to Reduce MRLs to Limit of Quantification for Pesticides on Imported Products through Food and Feed Omnibus Package

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Prepared By: Tania De Belder

Approved By: Tyler Babcock

Report Highlights:

On December 16, 2025, the European Commission published its draft Food & Feed Omnibus proposal amending, amongst others, Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 on Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs). In the proposal, the Commission seeks to set residue levels for non-EU-approved pesticides at the “limit of quantification,” effectively a zero-tolerance level, which could impact U.S. exports of soybeans, corn, tree nuts, and other products that make up over \$5.4 billion in annual exports to the EU.

Introduction

To foster greater competitiveness, the EU seeks to streamline regulations and cut administrative and reporting burdens for companies through so-called “Omnibus” packages that simplify definitions, streamline competing or overlapping standards, reduce reporting requirements, and expand exemptions. One of the ten proposed EU omnibuses, the Food and Feed Omnibus, was published in December 2025 with the intention to amend several food and feed safety regulations. The proposal was notified to the WTO on January 29, 2026 (see attached WTO notification). Described as “a package of measures to streamline and simplify EU food and feed safety legislation,” the proposed regulations may reduce some MRLs for pesticides on plant products to “limit of quantification” levels, effectively a zero-tolerance level, which could impact U.S. exports of soybeans, corn, tree nuts, and other products that make up over \$5.4 billion in annual exports to the EU. In addition, the proposed changes offer inadequate transition timelines for U.S. exporters to comply. On a positive note, the omnibus proposal appears to simplify regulations on biocides, feed additives, hygiene rules, and official controls at entry ports.

Withdrawal of Import Tolerances

In its [Vision for Agriculture and Food](#) (published in February 2025 – see [GAIN E42024-0029](#)), the European Commission reaffirmed its ambition to reduce the use of pesticides by establishing a principle that would remove import tolerances for plant protection products (pesticides) not allowed for use in the European Union. The Commission is advancing this principle through legislative changes proposed in the Food and Feed Omnibus package. The changes will align EU authorization for plant protection products for use in the European Union¹ with MRLs for plant protection products on imported goods.² Specifically, in the Food and Feed Omnibus, the Commission is proposing to add text to Article 14(2) of Regulation (EC) No 396/2005, as follows:

“a MRL that has been set based on a CXL³ or a GAP⁴ implemented in a third country **can be revoked** and set in accordance with Article 18(1)(b)⁵ or Article 16⁶ if considered appropriate in the light of the outcome of an impact assessment.” (Bolding added.)

The proposed change will introduce an additional, non-risk-based element into MRL decisions under Regulation (EC) No 396/2005, potentially increasing uncertainty and trade disruptions for certain food and agricultural

¹ EU authorization for plant protection products for use in the European Union is outlined in Regulation 1107/2009, the regulation that governs the authorization, placing on the market, use, and control of plant protection products (pesticides, herbicides) across the European Union.

² MRLs for plant protection products on imported goods are outlined in Regulation 396/2005, the regulation that sets harmonized maximum residue levels (MRLs) for pesticides in or on food and feed of plant and animal origin across the European Union.

³ Codex Maximum Residue Limit.

⁴ Good Agricultural Practice

⁵ 0,01 mg/kg for those products for which no specific MRL is set out in Annexes II or III, or for active substances not listed in Annex IV unless different default values are fixed for an active substance in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 45(2) while taking into account the routine analytical methods available. Such default values shall be listed in Annex V.

⁶ Procedure for setting temporary MRLs in certain circumstances

products. If implemented as proposed, the legislative changes would limit the plant protection products⁷ available to the U.S. farmers seeking to export to the EU market to only those plant protection products approved for use in the EU.

Impact Assessment of Hazardous Pesticides entering EU through Imported Products

The [Commission launched on November 25 its impact assessment](#) with a view to align EU's production standards on pesticides with requirements applicable to imported products. As stated in the Commission's public announcement, the impact assessment will evaluate "potential impacts on trade flows for the EU, the competitiveness of European producers and the potential impact on consumers. The impact assessment will inform further policy action, including a possible legislative proposal to be presented in that regard." The aim of the legislative proposal, as described in the public release, is "to guarantee that the EU's ambitious standards do not lead to competitive disadvantage for EU farmers and the agri-food sector, while responding to consumers' expectations."

The impact assessment will provide the analytical basis for potential amendments to the existing legal framework to progress towards a reciprocity of standards. The impact assessment will include a study led by [the Joint Research Centre \(JRC\)](#), and will allow for stakeholder input. The preliminary JRC study is expected to be concluded by summer 2026, and the next steps of the impact assessment will follow.

In the Interim

As the Commission awaits the result of the impact assessment, the Food and Feed Omnibus proposes the EU Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 "already be amended to provide that, for **substances that are not approved in the Union** and that have certain particularly hazardous properties, MRLs that have been set based on good agricultural practices in third countries or Codex maximum limits **may be set at the limit of quantification (technical zero)**..." (Bolding added.)

Positive amendments regarding pesticides and MRLs

The Food and Feed Simplification Omnibus Regulation will amend ten legal acts related to food and feed safety. The changes focused on reducing administrative burden, eliminating duplicative steps, and accelerating decisions especially for approval of biological plant protection products, feed additives, and biocides will have a positive impact on all stakeholders. In the area of plant protection products, this refers to streamlined procedures to increase market access for biocontrol and low-risk active substances, and unlimited approval periods (subject to certain restrictions) for feed additives and biocides, instead of the current 10-year renewal cycles.

Reaction

The proposed legislation does not appear to be consistent with WTO sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreements. In many countries, including the United States, producers follow good agricultural practices that allow for the safe use of plant protection substances according to international standards-setting bodies like the Codex Alimentarius Commission. As the legislation appears to remove the requirement to complete a full risk

⁷ The proposed regulation is targeting substances with "mutagenic, carcinogenic, or reprotoxic properties as well as endocrine disruptors" and "persistent organic pollutants (POP), persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic (PBT) substances, and very persistent and very bioaccumulative (vPvB) substances."

assessment, U.S. industry has significant concerns, as do industry contacts in other major EU trading partners – including countries in which the EU recently signed free trade agreements with.

As stated in a position paper from CropLife Europe, “maintaining the current risk-based MRL framework is critical to protect consumer safety, provide legal certainty for farmers and companies, support compliance with WTO rules, and safeguard the competitiveness of the EU agri-food value chain and stable international trade.”

Next Steps

The publication of this proposal initiated the beginning of the legislative process. The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, as co-legislators, will now assess the Commission’s legislative proposal. Amendments to the legislative proposal will be made separately by the Parliament and Council; however, negotiations will eventually occur to find institutional agreement before the proposals are adopted as official EU law.

Submitting Feedback and Comments to the EU

The proposal is open for feedback for a period from December 18, 2025 – April 10, 2026. All feedback received will be summarized by the European Commission and presented to the European Parliament and Council with the aim of feeding into the legislative debate. Feedback received will be published on the *Have Your Say* website and therefore must adhere to the feedback rules. Impacted stakeholders are encouraged to provide feedback. Please visit this website for more information: [Food and feed safety – simplification omnibus](#).

Country members of the WTO can submit comments to the WTO notification until March 30, 2026.

Attachments:

[Food and Feed Omnibus - Proposal.pdf](#)

[Food and Feed Omnibus - Commission Staff Working Document.pdf](#)

[Food and Feed Omnibus - Call For Evidence.pdf](#)

[NEU911_Food and Feed Omnibus WTO SPS Notification.pdf](#)