



## ARCHIVES

Select Month ▾

## CATEGORIES

- ▶ Agriculture (1090)
  - ▶ Hydroponics (12)
- ▶ air pollution (4)
- ▶ Alternatives/Organics (1028)
  - ▶ National Organic Standards Board/National Organic Program (90)
  - ▶ Regenerative (9)
- ▶ Announcements (588)
- ▶ Antibacterial (129)
- ▶ Antibiotic Resistance (33)
- ▶ Antimicrobial (12)
- ▶ Aquaculture (30)
- ▶ Aquatic Organisms (28)
- ▶ Bats (6)
- ▶ Beneficials (44)
- ▶ Biodiversity (134)
- ▶ Biofuels (6)
- ▶ Biological Control (28)
- ▶ Biomonitoring (36)
- ▶ Birds (20)
- ▶ Breakdown Chemicals (2)
- ▶ btomoflone (1)
- ▶ Bug Bombs (2)
- ▶ Canada (10)
- ▶ Cannabis (27)
- ▶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (9)
- ▶ Chemicals (3954)
- ▶ Children (81)
- ▶ Children/Schools (233)
- ▶ cicadas (1)
- ▶ Climate (16)
- ▶ Climate Change (69)
- ▶ Clover (1)
- ▶ compost (2)
- ▶ Congress (3)
- ▶ contamination (128)
- ▶ Corporations (1003)
- ▶ deethylatrazine (1)
- ▶ Disease/Health Effects (1449)
- ▶ Disinfectants & Sanitizers (15)
- ▶ Drift (4)
- ▶ Drinking Water (3)
- ▶ Ecosystem Services (5)
- ▶ Emergency Exemption (2)
- ▶ Environmental Justice (147)
- ▶ Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (403)
- ▶ Events (82)
- ▶ Farm Bill (11)
- ▶ Farmworkers (169)
- ▶ Federal Agencies (226)
- ▶ Fertilizer (22)
- ▶ fish (10)
- ▶ Forestry (5)
- ▶ Fracking (4)
- ▶ Fungal Resistance (3)
- ▶ Fungicides (18)
- ▶ Genetic Engineering (521)
- ▶ Goats (2)
- ▶ Golf (15)
- ▶ Greenhouse (1)
- ▶ Groundwater (3)
- ▶ Health care (32)
- ▶ Herbicides (18)
- ▶ Holidays (32)
- ▶ Household Use (6)
- ▶ Indigenous People (2)
- ▶ Indoor Air Quality (4)
- ▶ Infectious Disease (3)
- ▶ Integrated and Organic Pest Management (63)
- ▶ International (378)
  - ▶ United Nations (6)
- ▶ Invasive Species (33)
- ▶ Label Claims (47)
- ▶ Lawns/Landscapes (231)
- ▶ Litigation (331)
- ▶ Livestock (7)
- ▶ Metabolites (3)
- ▶ Microbiata (17)
- ▶ Microbiome (20)
- ▶ Nanosilver (2)
- ▶ Nanotechnology (54)
- ▶ National Politics (386)
- ▶ Native Americans (1)
- ▶ Occupational Health (7)
- ▶ Oceans (1)
- ▶ Office of Inspector General (1)
- ▶ perennial crops (1)
- ▶ Pesticide Drift (145)
- ▶ Pesticide Efficacy (3)
- ▶ Pesticide Mixtures (2)
- ▶ Pesticide Regulation (721)
- ▶ Pesticide Residues (167)
- ▶ Pests (250)
- ▶ Pets (28)
- ▶ Plant Incorporated Protectants (1)
- ▶ Poisoning (6)
- ▶ Pollinators (757)
- ▶ Preemption (31)
- ▶ President-elect Transition (2)
- ▶ Repellent (2)
- ▶ Resistance (108)
- ▶ Rights-of-Way (1)
- ▶ Rodenticide (29)

## DAILY NEWS BLOG

« Breast Cancer Rates Higher Among African American Women from Disproportionate Chemical Exposure  
Support National Reckoning to Bridge Racial Divides with Meaningful Action »

### Current and Projected Patterns of Global Pesticide and Fertilizer Use Are Not Sustainable, Says UN. . . Again

26 Feb



(*Beyond Pesticides*, February 26, 2021) The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the environment arm of the highest-profile international organization (the UN), has issued a [draft report whose top finding is this](#): “The global goal to minimize adverse impacts of chemicals and waste by 2020 has not been achieved for pesticides and fertilizers.” Increased use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers — driven by rising demand for food, feed, fiber, fuel, and feedstock crops — is cited as causal, at least in part. Those factors no doubt contributed to the failure, but Beyond Pesticides’ report notes that increased uses are symptomatic of the larger issue: in the U.S. and globally, the current system is a dangerous dead-end for public and environmental health. According to the report, “With this dominant system in place, ‘reductions’ in use and impact are not sufficient. The whole system of petrochemical farming needs to be fundamentally reimagined, regenerative practices in agriculture, and in all land management. Such systems do not cause health and environmental damage, are more viable, and profitable. The report warns that, given the current trajectory, a more sustainable option.”

The UNEP draft report was produced just ahead of the meeting of the [UN Environment Assembly](#) (UNEA-5), which met virtually on February 22 and 23. The report is part of the Sustainable Development, or [IISD](#), writes that the UNEP report provides an understanding of current practices and drivers of pesticide use, identifies knowledge gaps regarding environmental and health risks, and offers recommendations for management practices, legislation, and policies. It also identifies transformative actions and enabling policies to minimize adverse impacts.

Background on this report includes multiple conferences, including the [Agenda 21 umbrella](#). Pointedly, the 2002 [Millennium Ecosystem Assessment](#) outcome document, *The Future We Want*, through which many nations committed to achieve, by 2020, the sound management of chemicals, the cycle and of hazardous waste in ways that lead to minimization of significant risks to human health and the environment.” In 2015, via *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, members “re-confirmed to ‘reduce the negative impacts of and chemicals which are hazardous for human health and the environment,’ including through the environmentally sound management and safe use of chemicals.”

The UNEP report notes the global failure to live up to these goals, given that the production and use of pesticides and fertilizers continued to increase, with global use growing at about 4.1% per year and projected to reach \$309 billion by 2020. The report acknowledges the ubiquity of pesticides and their degradates in the global environment. “Pesticides are omnipresent in the environment, including in soils and groundwater, and are frequently detected at levels that exceed legal or recommended standards.” And it nods to the myriad health harms they cause: “acute and chronic health impacts, with an estimated 385 million cases of non-fatal unintentional poisoning every year and approximately 11,000 deaths. Pesticide exposure is also associated with neurological, immunological, and reproductive effects, among other health impacts.”

In addition, the UNEP notes the adverse impacts of pesticides on nontarget species, which exacerbate the biodiversity crisis — the subject of a [UN 2019 report](#), the *IPBES Global Assessment Summary for Policymakers*; and the climbing rates of [resistance to pesticides in organisms and weeds](#) (as the UN has done previously), as well as fertilizers’ degradation of ecosystems, pollution of water systems from runoff, and contributions to climate change. *Beyond Pesticides* has reported, additionally, on the [UN’s identification of pesticide use as a human rights violation](#).

The report [recommends a series of actions](#), including:

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- ▶ About the Daily News Blog
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## RECENT COMMENTS

- ▶ Paula Morgan on [Glyphosate Weed Killers Reduce Crop Yields and Hamper Climate Mitigation Efforts](#)
- ▶ F. Cremins on [Evian Bottled Water, Touted for Its Purity, Tainted With Toxic Fungicide Pervasive in the Environment](#)
- ▶ Mark T. Lundholm on [Garden Pesticide Use Harms Local Bird Populations, Study Authors Say ‘We Should Simply Ban These Poisons’](#)

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Annual Financial Report	Children and Science	Management	Fill Out an Incident Report
Information	Fund for Invasive Wee Management	Safety Source on Pest Management Providers	Find an Attorney
Children and Science	Hawaii	Be Aware: Contaminated Waters	
Invasive Wee Management	National Organic Agriculture	Eating with a Conscience	
Rodenticides	Wildlife	Be Aware: Genetic Engineering	
Wood Preservation		Pesticide-Induced Diseases Database	
		Breast Cancer Prevention Gateway on Pesticide Hazards and Safe Pest Management	
		Herbicide Analysis	
		Safer Sanitizers and Disinfectants	
		Pets and Pesticides	
		The Safer Choice	
		Healthy Healthcare	
		Art Page	
		Pesticide Emergencies	
		U.S. Pesticide Reform Policies	
		State Regulations	
		Pesticides and You	
		News & Press	
		Spring Into Action Statements	



# BEYOND PESTICIDES

- ▶ [Water Management](#) (426)
- ▶ [Women's Health](#) (16)
- ▶ [Wood Preservatives](#) (33)
- ▶ [World Health Organization](#) (6)
- ▶ [Year in Review](#) (1)

**MOST VIEWED POSTS**

- ▶ [Lawsuit Challenges TruGreen Chemical Lawn Care Company for Deceptive Safety Claims; Pesticide Applications Stopped by Some States During COVID-19 Crisis as Nonessential](#) (87,765)
- ▶ [Glyphosate Causes Changes to DNA Function Resulting in Chronic Disease, According to Study](#) (54,834)
- ▶ [Over Two Million Bees Killed after Aerial Mosquito Spraying in South Carolina](#) (51,915)
- ▶ [Glyphosate Classified Carcinogenic by International Cancer Agency, Group Calls on U.S. to End Herbicide's Use and Advance Alternatives](#) (46,452)
- ▶ [Community Passes Resolution Banning Neonicotinoids](#) (43,495)
- ▶ [Cosmetic Lawn Pesticide Use Outlawed in Takoma Park, MD, First Local Ban Of its Type in U.S.](#) (42,059)
- ▶ [EPA and CDC Misdemeanor Local and State Officials and the Public on Safety of Mosquito Pesticides Used for Zika Virus](#) (40,725)
- ▶ [EPA Permits Experimental Release of 2.5 Billion Genetically Engineered Mosquitoes in California and Florida](#) (34,762)
- ▶ [Monarch Butterfly Numbers Keep Declining](#) (33,787)
- ▶ [Nitrate Pollution in Groundwater Linked to Birth Defects, Cancers and Thyroid Problems](#) (32,512)

compounds); and supporting extended product responsibility laws governing pesticide manufacturers and sellers

- [beefing up management strategies for fertilizers](#): enacting national policies for quality fertilizer control; strengthening global policies on sustainable and safe fertilizer use; scaling up training of all relevant stakeholders in fertilizer and nutrient management; and ensuring accessibility of suitable and affordable fertilizers

The UN Environmental Assembly's [Nature for Food project asserts](#) that humanity is at a crossroads of "human, animal, economic, and environmental health. On land and at sea our food and freshwater systems depend on natural resources, but population growth, dietary changes due to growing wealth, and agriculture-related pollution are degrading natural resources faster than they can reproduce." With world population likely to swell to 10 billion by 2050, food demand and pressure on these resources will increase.

Thus, the [draft UNEP reports asserts](#) that, given the projected growth of markets for pesticides and fertilizers, as well as prevailing deficiencies in current management systems, adverse impacts of the use of these products will continue to increase unless "a fundamental change in the course of action takes place." [It summarizes its recommendations with this](#): "To achieve a chemical-safe future with minimal adverse impacts from pesticides and fertilizers, both incremental and transformative actions are required that tackle root causes and shift market demand, coupled with supportive and enabling measures. While stakeholders in the value chain and agri-food system are contributing to minimize adverse effects of pesticides and fertilizers, there is further need to scale up their commitment through targets and road maps."

The [UNEP reports cheers](#): "Together we can achieve a world without adverse impacts from pesticides and fertilizers by taking ambitious and urgent action. But it goes on to acknowledge reality: "Despite a suite of international agreements and management schemes, and national policies and legislation, put in place to minimize the adverse impacts of pesticides and fertilizers, their effective implementation is lacking, particularly in low and middle income countries where there are prevailing capacity gaps. The benefits of pesticides and fertilizers come at the cost of a range of adverse impacts on the environment and health throughout their life cycles. In

the report, the quiet part out loud when it writes, "De- management procedures in place . . . adverse environment the case of authorized uses [of pesticides]." The superseded are toxic and dangerous now; (2) in the world of government grind very slowly; and (3) "mitigation" of harms of pesticide

Advocates say that there is an urgent need to stop "digging the notion of reducing associated risks and harms of more the market in any gradient way is an illusion — particularly is "all in" on developing new compounds, [chasing the next field.](#)

The changes that are needed to protect human and environmental health threats of pesticide use (and secondarily, use of synthetic, petrochemical bolder than the mitigating (and relatively anodyne) measures the report [Pesticides has written](#) about the folly, in the U.S., of "attempts to 'mitigate' exposure through small and piecemeal rules. Given the many thousand on the market [and] the complexity of trying to ensure "relative" safety for one conclusion. 'Mitigation' of pesticide risks is a nibble around the edge problem." The conclusion is even more valid when the problem is consistent

Reduction of harm is always desirable. But the solution to the gradual "minimization of risks and harms" strategy is a wholesale transition away "addiction" in agriculture (of which most farmers are victims more than addition to being genuinely [protective of human health, organic mana biodiversity, improve soil health, sequester carbon](#) (which helps mitigate and [safeguard surface- and groundwater quality.](#)

UNEP has elsewhere endorsed the efficacy of organic agriculture as a remedy to the variety of harms of the petrochemical-based approaches that dominate globally; see [Envisioning a Chemical-Safe World](#), Section 3, page 39. A year ago, [Beyond Pesticides covered a global survey report](#) indicating that the growth of organically managed farmland, across 180 countries, demonstrated some headway on the necessary transition. The UN would do well to heed its own warnings, recognize the shortcomings of approaches that may reduce some harm but do nothing to supplant the problematic system, and recommend that across the globe, governments work to achieve the organic transition.

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Annual Financials	Center for Chemical Pesticide and Information	ManagementSafe	Fill Out an Incident Report
	Children and Science	Golf, Pesticides, and Organic Practices	Find an Attorney
	Fund for Invasive Wee Management	Safer Mosquito Management	
	National Pesticide Organic Agriculture	Safety Source on Pest Management Providers	
	Rodenticides	Be Aware: Contaminated Waters	
	Wildlife	Eating with a Conscience	
	Wood Preservation	Be Aware: Genetic Engineering	
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		Breast Cancer Prevention	
		Gateway on Pesticide Hazards and Safe Pest Management	
		Herbicide Analysis	
		Safer Sanitizers and Disinfectants	
		Pets and Pesticides	
		The Safer Choice	
		Healthy Healthcare	
		Art Page	
		Pesticide Emergencies	
		U.S. Pesticide Reform Policies	
		State Regulations	
		Pesticides and You	
		News & Press	
		Spring Into Action	
		Statements	



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