

ALL MATERIALS EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 (LONDON, GMT) ON THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER:

How are UK supermarkets doing on pesticides? (Media Pack)

Information included in media pack:

- Press release (including 2019 'best in class' overall ranking)
- Supermarket pesticide scorecard – a look at the detail of the 2019 ranking
- Ten additional key findings
- What is PAN UK asking supermarkets to do? (key recommendations)
- What can UK shoppers do?
- PAN UK rankings from 2009 and 2011
- Methodology for 2019 supermarket ranking

Press release

UK supermarkets keeping customers in dark over toxic pesticides

A ranking launched today by Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN UK) has criticised supermarkets for failing to be transparent about pesticides in their global supply chains. It has also revealed that UK supermarkets are not doing enough to protect human health and the environment from the most hazardous pesticides, which can include carcinogens, reproductive toxins and endocrine disruptors that interfere with hormones.

Despite being critical of the supermarket sector as a whole, PAN UK's ranking does clearly reveal that some companies are doing much better than others. M&S, Waitrose and Sainsbury's were found to be 'making good progress' while Co-op, Tesco, Morrisons and Aldi received a middling ranking of 'could do better'. Meanwhile, Asda and Iceland are 'lagging behind'. Lidl was the only supermarket which failed to respond to the PAN UK survey and so came last.



The results echo those of previous supermarkets rankings conducted by PAN UK in 2009 and 2011, with some notable exceptions.(1) Waitrose has jumped from fourth to second, only losing out in 2019 to M&S which has come either first or second in all three rankings. Co-op, however, has dropped three spots down the table to fourth despite topping the ranking in 2011. Asda has also taken a tumble from fifth to eighth, while Sainsbury's has consistently remained in third.

Josie Cohen from PAN UK said: "UK shoppers are increasingly concerned about the impact of pesticides on their own health, the health of farmers and the natural environment.(2) But supermarkets aren't being open about pesticides, so a concerned shopper trying to find out what chemicals they and their family are exposed to has nowhere to go. The information isn't on food labels or supermarket websites. Customers have the right to know which food contains the most pesticides so, at the very least, supermarkets should be publishing the results of their in-house residue testing schemes."

PAN UK surveyed and ranked the 10 supermarkets with the largest share of grocery sales against eight criteria related to pesticides. The findings highlighted the following concerns:

- UK supermarkets are not doing enough to reduce the harms caused to bees and other pollinators by their operations. For example, Aldi is the only supermarket to have completely prohibited the use of bee-toxic neonicotinoids (which were banned by the EU in 2018) throughout its global supply chains.
- All UK supermarkets allow the use of pesticides in their global supply chains which meet the UN criteria for 'Highly Hazardous Pesticides' (HHPs) due to their high potential to cause harm to human health or the environment.(3)
- All UK supermarkets with a gardening section (which excludes M&S and Iceland) continue to sell pesticide products, providing little or no information beyond what is on the label to customers on the potential risks to human health and the environment, or how best to avoid them.
- Some UK supermarkets have become less transparent over the past decade with regards to pesticides. For example, Co-op and M&S used to publish the results of their in-house residue testing programme so shoppers could find out which pesticides appear in the food they buy. However, not a single supermarket currently publishes this information. In addition, almost all supermarkets have lists of specific pesticides which are either monitored, restricted or banned entirely from being used in their global supply chains. M&S is the only supermarket which currently makes their lists publically available.(4)
- In general, the higher-end supermarkets are doing more to reduce pesticide-related harms linked to their global supply chains. As a result, shoppers concerned about pesticides who are on lower incomes are often left with little choice but to shop at supermarkets with weaker standards.

Cohen added: "Most of the pesticides used in global agriculture are entirely unnecessary. There are tried and tested non-chemical alternatives which protect human health and don't trash the environment but still produce the amount of food we need." She concluded: "The ranking has revealed that the pricier supermarkets tend to be doing more to tackle pesticides. But the truth is all UK supermarkets make huge profits so there is absolutely no need to pass the cost of pesticide reduction on to customers. If we are to have any chance of reversing the current biodiversity and public health crises, then all supermarkets need to step up and do more to prevent pesticide-related harms."

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NOTES TO EDITOR:

- (1) Previous supermarkets ranking tables collated and published by PAN UK in 2009 and 2011 are included in the media pack and also available upon request.
- (2) Research launched by the Soil Association in November 2019 entitled “How shoppers changing attitudes are shaping the organic market” reveals that the issue of pesticides has risen in people’s consciousness, in particular, health concerns over residues left on or in food:
www.soilassociation.org/certification/trade-news/2019/november/01/how-shoppers-changing-attitudes-are-shaping-the-organic-market/
- (3) The UN’s World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Environment Programme (UNEP) all recognise that highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs) cause adverse human health and environmental effects and support concerted action to address HHPs. More information can be found on their websites:
https://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/pesticides/en/
<http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/thematic-sitemap/theme/pests/code/hhp/en/>
<http://www.saicm.org/Implementation/EmergingPolicyIssues/HighlyHazardousPesticides/tabid/5479/Default.aspx>
- (4) Marks and Spencer’s ‘Pesticide Policy’ is published online and includes the lists of pesticides which the company prohibits, restricts and monitors:
<https://corporate.marksandspencer.com/documents/plan-a-our-approach/foods/foods-pesticides-policy.pdf>
- (5) PAN UK is the only UK charity focused on tackling the problems caused by pesticides and promoting safe and sustainable alternatives in agriculture, urban areas, homes and gardens. For more information visit PAN UK www.pan-uk.org

Supermarket pesticide scorecard – a look at the detail of the 2019 ranking

Supermarket Pesticide Scorecard		PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK UK									
	ALDI	ASDA	CO OP	Iceland	LIDL	M&S	Morrisons	Sainsbury's	TESCO	WAITROSE	
Supporting suppliers											
Residues in food											
Highly hazardous pesticides											
Customer engagement											
Bees and pollinators											
Transparency											
Pesticide products				N/A		N/A					
Organic											

Lagging behind
 Could do better
 Making good progress
 Outstanding
 N/A Do not sell gardening products

*Lidl failed to respond to PAN UK

Ten additional key findings

1. Aldi is the only supermarket which does not allow the use of any pesticide that is banned by the European Union anywhere in its global supply chains. This is significant given that the European Union has the strictest pesticide regime in the world and has therefore banned many hazardous pesticides which are allowed for use in other countries.
2. Asda, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose test produce specifically for glyphosate residues. However, no other supermarkets do so despite glyphosate's overuse in global agriculture and widespread public concern regarding its potential impacts.
3. Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose offer deals and discounts to their customers on pesticide products. This contravenes the UN International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management which says that retailers should not offer "...incentives or gifts to encourage the purchase of pesticides" (see clause 11.2.18).
4. Unlike other supermarkets, M&S, Tesco and Waitrose appear not to include fish as standard in their in-house residue testing programmes. This is despite the common overuse of pesticides on fish farms.
5. M&S, Waitrose and Sainsbury's were ranked as 'Outstanding' in their efforts to support suppliers to use non-chemical alternatives. All three companies received full marks because they are conducting research and training, offering bespoke advice and guidance documents and enabling farmers and growers to come together to share learnings on pesticide reduction.
6. While Aldi has completely banned the use of bee-toxic neonicotinoids throughout its global supply chains, Waitrose have severe restrictions in place. They don't allow their suppliers

anywhere in the world to use neonicotinoids “...unless a valid justification presented, detailed risk analysis and elimination plans have been drawn up and agreed with Waitrose”.

7. M&S is the only supermarket which told PAN UK that they make efforts to use imperfect produce in their prepared meals. Making sure that ‘wonky’ fruit and vegetables aren’t thrown away is one way that supermarkets can reduce the need for cosmetic pesticides.
8. Rather than conducting their own research or training for suppliers on adopting non-chemical alternatives to pesticides and protecting pollinators, many supermarkets outsource these activities to external companies and organisations which don’t go as far as they could on reducing pesticide related harms.
9. Only Waitrose and M&S make publically available their examples of ‘best practice’ which detail efforts by their suppliers to reduce pesticides and adopt non-chemical alternatives. Meanwhile, Sainsbury’s and Co-op appear to collect this information but do not put it in the public domain. This lack of transparency holds back the sector which could be moving forward together to reduce pesticide-related harms.
10. While Aldi and Lidl are often considered each other’s closest competitors, Aldi was extremely responsive to PAN UK while Lidl was the only supermarket to ignore all of our communication requests.

What is PAN UK asking supermarkets to do?

PAN UK is calling for UK supermarkets to take the following measures. As revealed by our ranking, some supermarkets are already taking some of these actions:

- Improve transparency around pesticides by, at the very least, publishing the results of their in-house residue testing schemes, lists of monitored, restricted and prohibited pesticides, the company pesticide policy
- Increase efforts to phase out the most hazardous pesticides (known as ‘Highly Hazardous Pesticides’) from their global supply chains and, wherever possible, replace them with non-chemical alternatives.
- Support and encourage all their suppliers to adopt pollinator-friendly practices such as leaving field margins uncultivated.
- Prohibit the use of the three bee-toxic neonicotinoids that were banned by the EU in 2018 (clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam) throughout their global supply chains. End the use of other pesticides known to be particularly harmful to bees such as Fipronil, Sulfoxaflor, Flupyradifurone and Permethrin.
- Immediately end the sale of all synthetic pesticide products.
- Support their suppliers to reduce pesticide use through conducting research and training, offering bespoke advice, producing guidance documents and enabling them to come together to share learnings.
- Put in place measures to reduce pesticide residues in food, including stringent action plans for tackling the most serious residue problems.
- Make more effort to communicate with customers to encourage them to:
 - Buy fruit and vegetables which aren’t cosmetically perfect
 - Accept that they may occasionally find a ‘bug’ in fresh produce
 - Accept that not all fresh produce items will be available all year round
- Proactively boost organic sales through actions such as expanding their organic ranges and increasing marketing of organic produce.

What can UK shoppers do?

There are a range of things that shoppers can do to encourage their supermarket to take action on pesticides:

- Tell their supermarket to reduce pesticide-related harms linked to their global supply chains. Shoppers can do this via PAN UK's quick online action or in person in-store.
- Stop buying pesticide products so supermarkets get the message that they shouldn't sell them.
- Buy the wonkiest vegetables possible, thereby reducing the need for cosmetic pesticides.
- Congratulate their supermarket if they find a bug in fresh produce. Complaints from customers about bugs are one of the factors holding supermarkets back from reducing their pesticide use.
- Buy local, seasonal vegetables from their supermarket whenever possible, reducing the need to use fungicides which prevent produce from rotting while being transported.
- Buy organic when possible to let supermarkets know that the demand is there. Shoppers who can't afford or access a fully organic diet, can find out which items to prioritise by checking PAN UK's [Dirty Dozen and Clean Fifteen](#) lists.

PAN UK supermarket ranking from 2009

PAN UK's 2009 summary comparison on whether supermarkets are addressing the following issues:

Pesticide policy criterion	ALDI	ASDA	OP	LIDL	M&S	MORRISONS	Sainsbury's	somerfield	TESCO	Waitrose
Publish its residue testing results?	☹️	☹️	😊	☹️	😊	☹️	😊	☹️	☹️	☹️
Action plans to tackle residue problems beyond legal compliance?	☹️	☹️	☹️	☹️	😊	☹️	😊	☹️	☹️	☹️
Commit to phase out specific hazardous pesticides?	☹️	☹️	😊	☹️	😊	☹️	😊	☹️	☹️	☹️
Stated aim and actions to reduce use of pesticides?	☹️	😊	😊	☹️	😊	☹️	😊	😊	😊	😊
Pest management strategy promotes alternatives to pesticides?	😐	😊	😊	😐	😊	😐	😊	😊	😊	😊
Technical support for growers to reduce reliance on pesticides?	😐	😊	😊	😐	😊	😐	😊	😐	😊	😊
Information for consumers on pesticide use issues?	☹️	☹️	😊	☹️	😊	☹️	😊	☹️	☹️	☹️
Engage with consumers on unnecessary use of pesticides for cosmetic appearance of fruit & vegetables?	☹️	☹️	☹️	☹️	☹️	☹️	☹️	☹️	☹️	☹️

Click on a specific criterion to read a detailed breakdown of actions and information for each retailer.

😊 A company is taking concrete actions for a specific criterion and describes in some detail the aims and methods.

😐 A company mentions the issue but gives no detail on how this is implemented, or lacks targets or reporting on progress.

😐 A company may be addressing the issue, but does not provide any information on it, or the information is too vague to judge whether it is making a genuine effort.

☹️ There is no policy commitment or no information provided for consumers.

[Click here to voice your concerns to your supermarket!](#)

PAN UK supermarket ranking from 2011

Table 1. Summary assessment of supermarket performance on PAN UK's 12 policy criteria

Pesticide policy criterion	ALDI	ASDA	CO-OP	LIDL	M&S	MORRISONS	Sainsbury's	TESCO	Waitrose
Publish its residue testing results?	☹️	☹️	😊	☹️	😊*	😐	☹️	☹️	☹️
Action plans to tackle residue problems beyond legal compliance?	☹️	😊	😊	☹️*	😊	😐	😊*	😊*	😊
Commit to phase out specific hazardous pesticides?	☹️	😊*	😊	☹️	😊*	😊*	😊	😊*	😊
Stated aim and actions to reduce use of pesticides?	😐	😊*	😊	☹️	😊	😊	😊*	😊*	😊
Pest management strategy promotes alternatives to pesticides?	😐	😐	😊	☹️	😊*	☹️	😊*	😊	😊
Technical support for growers to reduce reliance on pesticides?	😐	☹️	😊	☹️	😊	☹️	😊	😊	😊*
Info for consumers on pesticide use issues?	☹️	☹️	😊	☹️	😊	☹️	😊	☹️	☹️
Engage with consumers on unnecessary use of pesticides for cosmetic appearance of fruit & vegetables?	☹️	☹️	😊	☹️	☹️	☹️	😊	☹️	😊*
9a. Does it promote pollinator-friendly practices?	😐	😐	😊	☹️	😊	😐	😊	😐	😊
Does it reduce exposure to bee-toxic pesticides?	☹️	☹️	😊	☹️	☹️	😊	☹️	😊	😊*
Address potential loss of pesticides under new EU law?	😐	😐	😊	☹️	😊	😐	😐	☹️	☹️
Phase out plans for PAN International targets for global bans (endosulfan and paraquat)?	☹️	☹️	😊	☹️	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊

What process did PAN UK go through to rank the supermarkets? A description of our methodology

PAN UK went through an extremely detailed process to produce our supermarket ranking. Below is an overview but we are very happy to answer additional questions so let us know if you want further detail, including a copy of the full survey.

Stage 1: Supermarkets selected

We selected supermarkets based on their share of the UK groceries market in 2019. This gave us a list of the top ten supermarkets in order of grocery market share: Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Aldi, Morrisons, Lidl, Co-op, Waitrose, Marks and Spencer, Iceland.

Stage 2: Survey sent to supermarkets

We sent a survey to each of the 10 supermarkets, with a four week deadline to respond. The survey asked questions about the following eight topics related to pesticides in supermarkets' global supply chains. Listed below each topic are the sub-topics which we assessed supermarkets on:

Topic 1: Supporting suppliers to use non-chemical alternatives

- What support does the company provide to help suppliers, in particular farmers and growers, to reduce pesticide use in their operations?
- Does the company have a stated objective to promote Integrated Pest Management (IPM) amongst its farmers and growers?
- What form does the support offered to farmers and growers on IPM take? (for example, research, training, guidance documents, bespoke advice, enabling farmers and growers to share learnings on IPM with each other)

Topic 2: Monitoring and reducing pesticide residues in food

- What items does the company monitor for pesticide residues? (for example, fruit and vegetables, wheat products, rice, meat, dairy, fish)
- Does the company conduct testing specifically for glyphosate residues?
- Are there action plans in place for tackling the most serious residue problems?

Topic 3: Phasing out the most hazardous pesticides

- Does the company use hazard classifications or other criteria to decide which active substances to prohibit, restrict or monitor?
- Does the company have lists of active substances that it prohibits or restricts throughout its supply chain?
- Does the company have a commitment in place to phase out the most hazardous pesticides (known as Highly Hazardous Pesticides or HHPs) from its supply chain?
- In particular, does the company have any measures in place to address concerns regarding the use of the following active substances in its supply chain; Lambda-cyhalothrin, Chlorpyrifos, Thiacloprid, Flusilazole, Carbendazim, Chlorothalonil, Linuron, Paraquat, Glyphosate?

Topic 4: Engaging with customers on reducing pesticide use

- Does the company have any measures in place to encourage consumers to:
 - Buy fruit and vegetables which aren't cosmetically perfect?
 - Accept that they may occasionally find a 'bug' (either a pest or beneficial) in fresh produce they buy from you?
 - Accept that not all fresh produce items will be available all year round?

Topic 5: Reducing harm caused to bees and pollinators

- What is the company doing to ensure that bees and other pollinators are not harmed as a result of its supply chains?
- What specific support does the company provide for suppliers to adopt pollinator friendly practices?
- Are there any measures in place to ensure that the three neonicotinoids that were banned by the EU in 2018 (clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam) are not being used to grow products in the company's global supply chain?
- What measures does the company have in place to monitor, reduce and stop the use of the following active substances that are harmful to bees and other pollinators; Fipronil, Sulfoxaflor, Flupyradifurone, Permethrin?

Topic 6: Being transparent about pesticides

- What information on pesticides does the company make publically available?
- Does the company publish the results of its residue testing?
- Does the company publish lists of pesticides that have been banned from its supply chain?
- Is the company willing to provide PAN UK with the lists of pesticides that it bans, restricts or monitors throughout its supply chain?

Topic 7: Selling pesticide products

- Does the company sell pesticide products (including weed killers) for use in homes and gardens?
- Does the company provide any guidance information for members of the public on how to minimise the health and environmental risks associated to the pesticide products it sells?
- Does the company offer deals and discounts on the pesticide products it sells?
- Does the company sell non-chemical products for controlling weeds and insects?
- Does the company provide any guidance information for members of the public on non-chemical alternatives to pesticides?

Topic 8: Boosting organic sales

- Does the company have any plans to increase the amount of organic items it sells?

Stage 3: Supermarkets scored and ranked

After four weeks, PAN UK received survey responses from all of the top 10 supermarkets, except for one (Lidl). We set about analysing and scoring the responses. Each answer was scored from low to high 1-3. A higher score was received when a supermarket was doing well compared to other supermarkets, and likewise a low score was received if a supermarket was doing comparatively badly.

Based on their scores, supermarkets were then allocated a ranking for each topic of 'lagging behind' (1 trolley), 'could do better' (2 trolleys), 'making good progress' (3 trolleys) or 'outstanding' (4 trolleys). Each supermarket's total number of trolleys was added up to reveal the final ranking positions. When two supermarkets received the same total number of trolleys, the supermarket which received the highest number of 'making good progress' rankings was placed higher up the overall ranking.

Although M&S and Iceland do not sell gardening products and therefore don't stock pesticide products, their scores were sufficiently high (M&S) and low (Iceland) for this to not affect their positions in the overall ranking.

Stage 4: Supermarkets given an Opportunity to Comment

We sent each supermarket an outline of what we were planning to publish about them and give them a chance to respond. We received responses from all supermarkets except for Asda, Iceland and Lidl. PAN UK has represented the responses we received as fairly and honestly as possible, while making them comprehensible and engaging to the public.

Next steps

In 2020, PAN UK plans to work closely with as many supermarkets as possible to help them strengthen their pesticide policies and reduce pesticide-related harms in their supply chains.

For further information on this project, please get in touch with PAN UK using the following details:

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