**Toxic pesticides banned for EU use exported from UK**

Trade loopholes allow chemicals to be sent to developing countries as well as US, Japan and Australia

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[Toxic pesticides](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/may/29/pesticides-everyday-products-toxics-guide) banned for use in the UK are being exported to countries with less stringent regulations, under loopholes in international trade rules.

Two companies, Syngenta and Ineos, are exporting from UK facilities large quantities of pesticides based on chemicals that would be illegal for use in the EU, according to documents obtained by [Greenpeace](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/greenpeace) UK’s Unearthed investigation and the Swiss NGO Public Eye, in freedom of information requests.

Export notification data for 2018 showed Syngenta planned to ship more than 28,000 tonnes of pesticide containing paraquat, which was banned for use in the UK in 2007. [Paraquat](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/aug/22/uk-condemned-shocking-export-deadly-weedkiller-poorer-countries-paraquat), which is fatal at small doses if ingested, can damage the lungs, eyes, kidneys and heart through long-term exposure.

Inovyn, a subsidiary of the chemicals firm Ineos, made export notifications for 4,000 tonnes of the soil fumigant 1,3-dichloropropene, a suspected carcinogen banned in the EU because of the risks it poses to wildlife and groundwater. The UK was responsible for about 40% of the exports of these and similar products from the EU in 2018, the year to which the documents apply.

While exporting these products is legal, despite the restrictions on their use in [Europe](https://www.theguardian.com/world/europe-news), campaigners want the practice banned because of the likely harm to the importing countries.

Baskut Tuncak, who from 2014 to 2020 was the UN’s special rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and waste, said: “The UK must urgently end the export of paraquat and 1,3-dichloropropene. These pesticides are among the worst of the worst, unquestionably hazardous to human health.”

In July, Tuncak and 35 experts from the Human Rights Council called for [an end to such exports from rich nations to the developing world](https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26063&LangID=E). France is enacting a ban, which will come into force from 2022, but other countries have been reluctant to place constraints on their industries.

Some of the [pesticides are destined for developing countries](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/mar/07/un-experts-denounce-myth-pesticides-are-necessary-to-feed-the-world), including Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, India and Indonesia. Large amounts are also sold to rich nations: the US and Australia buy quantities of paraquat, according to the data, and Japan takes paraquat and 1,3-dichloropropene.

“Just because a country is wealthy does not mean there are not grave human rights violations and abuses being committed against vulnerable communities,” said Tuncak. “In the US, where three times more pesticide products are registered for use, farmworkers suffer more chemical-related injuries and illnesses than any other workforce. The racial dimension cannot be ignored, with so many agricultural and food workers from migrant and minority backgrounds.”

Doug Parr, chief scientist at Greenpeace UK, said selling the pesticides was “exploitative hypocrisy” and urged ministers to end the practice. “The UK is at the heart of a European pesticide scandal that allows chemical giants to [flood other countries](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/nov/10/thailand-pesticides-dow-monsanto-syngenta-trump) – many of them poorer nations – with toxic chemicals on a major scale,” he said. “These [pesticides are so dangerous](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/apr/06/farms-could-slash-pesticide-use-without-losses-research-reveals) that we’ve made the very sensible decision to ban their use in our own country and across Europe. What gives us the right to think it is morally defensible to continue producing and shipping them around the world?”

A spokesperson for Ineos told the Guardian its 1,3-dichloropropene was exported under licence only to Japan, through the ECHA’s prior informed consent procedure, and that it was the most effective product against plant disease from nematodes (roundworms), helping to protect important food crops.

A spokesperson for Syngenta said: “The crop protection industry is one of the most highly regulated in the world, with products subject to extensive evaluation before they are approved for registration and sale. To be exported and sold, any finished product needs to comply with the specific regulatory requirements of the importing countries.