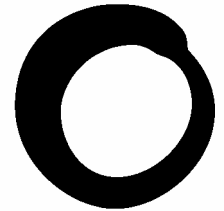


July 2004



**Friends of
the Earth**

Briefing

Pesticides in supermarket food

Friends of the Earth believes that the food we buy in supermarkets should be safe to eat and produced in a way which safeguards the environment. For example, consumers should be able to buy food without having to worry about whether it contains pesticide residues. Yet Government figures show that about half of the fruit and vegetables sold in supermarkets contain pesticide residues.

Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems, which make life better for people.

Friends of the Earth is:

- the UK's most influential national environmental campaigning organisation**
- the most extensive environmental network in the world, with almost one million supporters across five continents and over 60 national organisations worldwide**
- a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in over 200 communities throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland**
- dependent on individuals for over 90 per cent of its income.**

To join or make a donation call us on 0800 581 051

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What can supermarkets do about pesticides?

Supermarkets sell most of the food we eat in the UK. The top four supermarkets (Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, and Morrisons/Safeway) control over 70 per cent of the grocery market in the UK¹. Supermarkets therefore have a high level of influence and control over the food chain. Farmers who supply the major supermarkets will normally be required to follow protocols which set out guidance on pesticide use and which may suggest some non-chemical ways of controlling pests and diseases. The most common of these are the 'Assured Produce' schemes. However there is so far little indication that these protocols have resulted in any notable decrease in pesticide use or the incidence of pesticide residues in supermarket food. The following list shows the incidence of residues in supermarket fruit and vegetables according to the last three annual reports published by the Pesticide Residues Committee (PRC)².

Pesticide residues in supermarket food 1998-2003

Supermarket	Percentage of fruit and veg with residues	Number of samples
Marks & Spencer	47	225
Safeway	43	674
Sainsbury's	42	1217
Asda	42	884
Co-op	42	206
Tesco	42	1493
Somerfield	41	241
Waitrose	41	210
Morrisons	39	325
Total	42	5475

Friends of the Earth consider that supermarkets should do more to reduce pesticide use. The codes of practice they set up with farmers should aim for a significant reduction in pesticide use and zero residues of pesticides in food. In practice this means that there should be no detectable residues even as technology develops and allows lower and lower levels to be found. Supermarkets should also prohibit the use of those pesticides which have the highest evidence of risk to the environment or health. This includes pesticides which have been shown to disrupt the hormone system such as carbendazim, lindane and vinclozolin, and those that affect the nervous system such as aldicarb and chlorpyrifos.

Farmers will need support and advice in order to reduce pesticide use significantly and to find alternatives to the most dangerous pesticides. Supermarkets should help farmers by providing advice and information to them about alternatives and by paying farmers a fair price for the food they supply. Supermarkets, and their customers, will need to be more flexible about the cosmetic appearance of fruit and vegetables because farmers have to use pesticides to achieve blemish free produce.

Supermarkets will also need to check carefully that farmers are following good practice.

¹Taylor Nelson Sofres share of till roll 52 w/e December 8 2002. From Grocer magazine 11 January 2003 "Redrawing the grocery map of Britain" and Guardian 14 January 2003 "Who'll be going down the aisle".

² Pesticide Residues Committee Quarterly and Annual Pesticide Monitoring Reports 1998-2003

However the Government must also play its part in finding alternatives to harmful pesticides, promoting and rewarding good practice and taking action where farmers flaunt the rules.

Friends of the Earth have found that most supermarkets have a policy to reduce the use of pesticides in producing their food, or to reduce the incidence of residues in the food they sell. However, there is a wide variation in the action that each of the supermarkets is taking and in how open they are prepared to be about their policies and about the pesticides which are found. Friends of the Earth regularly asks the supermarkets what they are doing to reduce pesticide use and residues - the table below gives our verdict.

Friends of the Earth's position

Friends of the Earth want supermarkets to take the following action:

1. Prohibit the use of the most dangerous pesticides by farmers who supply them, including those that are proven to disrupt the hormone system;
2. Aim for residue-free food and make this clear in their codes of practice on pesticides;
3. Provide free advice and information to the farmers who supply them about alternative methods of controlling pests and diseases;
4. Be more flexible about cosmetic standards for fruit and vegetables to make it easier for farmers to cut down on pesticide use.
5. Lobby Government for more research into alternatives to pesticides;
6. Set up independent monitoring and verification schemes to check on pesticide usage by farmers; and
7. Publish the results of their own pesticide residue testing in a way which is accessible to their customers.

Ask your supermarket for real food!

Have a look at the table below to see what the supermarkets are doing to get pesticides out of food. If you're not satisfied with your supermarket's response, let them know. Please send any replies you get to info@foe.co.uk.

How Friends of the Earth rate the supermarkets on pesticides

Our verdict	Supermarket	Steps in the right direction	Next steps
1. Leaders	Marks & Spencer	M&S has prohibited the use by its suppliers of 60 pesticides. Although some of these are banned in the UK already, the M&S prohibition will apply globally. 19 other pesticides can be used on a restricted basis only. M&S has committed to phasing out any pesticides which may pose health or environmental risks before they are officially banned. It has set targets for residue reduction in fresh produce and is aiming for	M&S still needs to ban some risky pesticides such as vinclozolin - a hormone disrupter, which is restricted but not banned. M&S will need to work with its suppliers to find alternatives. M&S may need to be more flexible about the cosmetic appearance of its food in order to meet its residue targets.

Pesticides in supermarket food

		zero residues in the long term. M&S publishes the results of its own testing on its website.	
	Co-op	Co-op has drawn up a list of 50 pesticides which are either prohibited or restricted and gives practical advice to help farmers find alternatives. It is aiming for zero residues in all its food and has committed to phasing out all pesticides which disrupt the hormone system. Co-op also publishes its residue testing results - it was the first supermarket to do so.	Co-op has not included some of the most risky pesticides like carbendazim and vinclozolin on its prohibited list yet – they are still only restricted. It should work with farmers to find alternatives to these pesticides.
3. Getting there	Waitrose	Waitrose is working with its suppliers globally to eliminate the use of several pesticides including lindane. Others can only be used on a very restricted basis including all the organophosphates which are of concern due to the way they work on the nervous system. Waitrose has said it will phase out the use of hormone disrupting pesticides. It actively seeks alternatives to these pesticides.	Waitrose should make its testing results public and aim for zero residues. It still needs to ban some of the most risky pesticides like carbendazim and vinclozolin - at present their use is only restricted. It needs to continue to find alternatives to the pesticides it restricts in order that they can be phased out completely.
4. Work to do	Sainsbury's	Sainsbury's has made a commitment to pesticide reduction and to phasing out aldicarb, carbendazim and vinclozolin, but carbendazim is still turning up on Sainsbury's fruit and veg. It says that it will not allow the use by its suppliers in any country of any pesticide which is banned in the UK.	Sainsbury's should make its residue testing results public, and publish a list of prohibited and restricted pesticides. It should aim for zero residues in all its food. It should set a date for its commitment to phasing out aldicarb, carbendazim and vinclozolin, and add other risky pesticides to its list. It should work with farmers to find alternatives to these pesticides.
5. Falling behind	Asda	Asda claims that it has prohibited the use of carbendazim, but this is still turning up in Asda fruit and vegetables. It does not appear to have a general policy of pesticide reduction and failed to respond to a recent Friends of the Earth survey on pesticide policies.	Asda should live up to its promises and publish its testing results so consumers can make sure these pesticides are not still in Asda food. It should aim for zero residues.
	Tesco	Tesco has developed a scheme called Nature's Choice which	Tesco should publish details of its Nature's Choice

		encourages 'rational' pesticide use, but details of the scheme are not available to the public. Tesco says it works with suppliers to keep pesticide use to the minimum required, but nearly half of Tesco fruit and veg contains residues according to Government testing.	scheme. It should ban the most risky pesticides and make the results of its residue testing public.
7. Stuck in a rut	Somerfield	Somerfield indicates that it aims to reduce pesticide usage or residues but it won't prohibit pesticides which are approved in the UK.	Somerfield should ban the most dangerous pesticides like hormone disrupters and work with farmers to find alternatives. It should publish its own residue testing results.
8. Slackers	Morrisons/Safeway	Morrisons has no stated policy to reduce pesticide residues and failed to respond to the last Friends of the Earth survey on pesticide policies. Safeway has said that it aims to reduce residues in its 'Kid's Range' apples and pears, but it is not clear if this policy will remain now that Safeway has been taken over by Morrisons	Morrisons should wake up to the fact that consumers do not want pesticides in their food. It should develop a pesticide reduction policy, and take action on phasing out the use of risky pesticides and work with farmers to find alternatives. It should also publish its own residue testing results.

Supermarket contact details:

Asda

Tel: 0500 100 055

Fax: 0113 241 7732

Email via web page: <http://www.asda.co.uk>

Write to:

Customer Services,
ASDA House,
Southbank,
Great Wilson Street,
Leeds LS11 5AD

Co-op

Tel: 0800 0686 727

Email: customer.relations@co-op.co.uk

Write to:

Customer Relations
Freepost MR9473
Manchester

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M4 8BA

Marks & Spencer

Tel: 0845 302 1234

Fax: 0845 303 0170

Email via web page: <http://www.marksandspencer.com>

Write to:

Retail Customer Services

Marks & Spencer

Chester Business Park

Wrexham Road

Chester CH4 9GA

Morrisons/Safeway

Tel: 01924 870000 and ask for the Customer Service Department

Write to:

Customer Service Department

Wm Morrison Supermarkets plc

J41 Industrial Estate

Carr Gate

Wakefield WF2 0XF

Sainsbury's

Tel: 0800 636 262

Email via website: <http://www.sainsburys.co.uk/contactus/>

Write to:

Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd

33 Holborn

London EC1N 2HT

Somerfield

Tel: 0117 935 9359

Fax: 0117 978 0629

Email via website: <http://www.somerfield.co.uk/site/contact/feedback/index.asp>

Write to:

Somerfield Stores Ltd

Somerfield House

Whitchurch Lane

Whitchurch

Bristol BS14 0TJ

Tesco

Tel: 0800 505 555

Email: customer.services@tesco.co.uk

Waitrose

Tel: 0800 188 884

Email: customer_service@waitrose.co.uk

Write to:

Waitrose Customer Service Department

Waitrose Limited

Doncastle Road

Bracknell

Berkshire RG12 8YA