

Study finds pesticide residues in 93% of organic Swiss farms

April 7, 2019



Swiss scientists found pesticide residues in 93% of organic farms, as well as in conventional farms.

(Keystone)

Most fields on organic farms in the Swiss Plateau are contaminated with pesticides, reports NZZ am Sonntag, citing a study by the University of Neuchatel.

Researchers collected more than 700 soil and plant samples from 62 farms and looked for traces of neonicotinoids, a class of insecticides that is chemically like nicotine and which is sometimes used to protect crops from sucking pests and chewing insects.

Residues have been found not only on conventional farms, but also in 93% of organic farms, as well as in the soils and plants of 80% of the ecological compensation areas, where such synthetic insecticides are prohibited.

Water and wind could have contaminated the biological and compensation areas, according to the researchers. The quantities of toxic residues found in organic fields and compensation areas were so high that up to 7% of auxiliary organisms, such as bumblebees, could be impacted.

Bio Suisse, the main organisation in the sector, describes the news in the newspaper as "frightening". It demands stricter restrictions on harmful pesticides. The Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture [external link](#) notes that three of the five substances found are now banned.

Total organic food sales exceeded CHF3 billion (\$3 billion) last year in Switzerland. More than half of consumers buy organic foods several times per week, according to Bio Suisse [external link](#). Organic farming represents 15.4% of the utilised agricultural land in the country.

Wedged between the Jura Mountains and the Alps, the Swiss Plateau is the most densely populated area of the country. The region encompasses the cantons of Zurich, Thurgau and Geneva. It incorporates large swathes of Lucerne, Aargau, Solothurn, Bern, Fribourg and Vaud, as well as smaller pockets in Neuchâtel, Zug, Schwyz, St. Gallen and Schaffhausen.