

EU pesticide residue changes could cut citrus imports by 92%

Proposed changes to EU maximum residue levels (MRLs) for certain pesticides could reduce agricultural imports, with citrus among the commodities facing the largest modeled impact, according to a report summarizing a European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC) study.

The JRC examined the potential effects of lowering MRLs for 18 non-EU-approved active substances to the limit of quantification (LOQ) for imported food and feed products. The substances span 235 commodities and 86 exporting countries, representing 10,583 substance-commodity-country combinations, of which 5,473 are reflected in recorded EU trade.

The study modeled three scenarios based on the extent to which exporters adapt production practices. It stresses that these scenarios are not predictions or forecasts, but represent possible outcomes under different assumptions.

Under the upper-bound "no adaptation" scenario, EU agricultural imports would decline 41%, while citrus imports would fall 92%. Under the intermediate scenario, overall agricultural imports would decline 8%, while the lower-bound scenario puts the reduction at 0.4%.

Reduced imports would also affect EU production and prices. In the upper-bound scenario, EU crop production increases 1.1 per cent overall, and farmland use expands by 1.9 million hectares, equivalent to 1.2 per cent of total EU farmed area. Citrus production increases 47 per cent. Under the intermediate scenario, overall EU production rises 0.23 per cent.

For consumers, the upper-bound scenario models an 85% increase in citrus prices. Under the intermediate scenario, citrus prices rise 5.6%, while table grape prices increase 6.5%. Under the lower-bound scenario, increases for all commodities remain below 1%.

The study also found that the EU is not self-sufficient in 29 of the impacted commodities. Replacement supplies could cost an estimated 2–9 per cent more, with figs, almonds, hazelnuts, and beans identified as among the products most difficult to replace.

The regulatory proposal remains under debate in the European Parliament and Council. The JRC study is a preliminary economic analysis rather than a formal impact assessment, and the final effects would depend on the substance, commodity, and ability of exporters to adapt.

To view the full report, click here. (https://www.fas.usda.gov/data/gain-report/2026/08/EU%20Report%20Outlines%20How%20Food%20and%20Feed%20Omnibus%20Could%20Cause%20EU%20Agricultural%20Imports%20to%20Decrease%2041%20Percent_Brussels%20USEU_European%20Union_E42026-0064.pdf)

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