



Recommendation 966 (1983)¹

Heavy metals in agricultural soil

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Recognising that western Europe and the industrialised world in general have for decades neglected the "hidden costs" of environmental pollution, and that the price for correcting past mistakes is now correspondingly high ;
2. Convinced that pollution must be halted regardless of cost wherever human health is affected or at risk ;
3. Concerned about the continued contamination of certain agricultural land by cadmium, in particular through the application of cadmium-rich sewage sludge, and artificial fertiliser and, to some extent, through atmospheric pollution ;
4. Considering that the high concentration of cadmium in sewage sludge is a direct consequence of more efficient methods in purifying plants, and that this calls for extra prudence in the use of such sludge for agricultural purposes ;
5. Worried also by increasing pollution of agricultural land by other heavy metals such as lead, mercury and chrome, especially near cities, heavy industries and major roads and, in the longer term, in other areas in Europe as well ;
6. Alarmed that food produced on such land has been shown to contain high levels of the above-mentioned substances, and that this may seriously affect the health of certain "risk groups" of food consumers ;
7. Concerned that, in spite of certain laudable initiatives, there is still insufficient co-operation at European level for the exchange of information and for launching joint research projects ;
8. Welcoming the European Community's plan to establish maximum limits for cadmium pollution by various types of industry, and hoping that a similar initiative can be taken as regards the content of cadmium and other harmful substances in sewage sludge put on agricultural land ;
9. Hoping that any agreement reached within the European Community in these fields can be extended to the non-Community member states of the Council of Europe,
10. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :
 - a. call on the governments of the member states :
 1. to increase their research efforts, at national and international level, to determine the extent of present pollution of agricultural soil by cadmium and other heavy metals, their absorption into food and their effects on human health, and the consequences for rivers, lakes and the sea ;

1. See [Doc. 5075](#), report of the Committee on Agriculture. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 1 July 1983.



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2. to extend the control of levels of cadmium and other harmful substances in sewage sludge used in agriculture- in the soil itself as well as in plants and animals intended for human consumption- and to establish safe and efficient limits in all these domains ;
 3. to intensify research, nationally and internationally, into ways of reducing cadmium levels in artificial fertilisers, and to shift, in the meantime, to imports of phosphate rock with a lower cadmium content ;
 4. to take effective measures first to secure an early and marked reduction, and eventually largely to eradicate the atmospheric pollution known as "acid rain", considering that the latter, apart from its many other negative effects on the flora and fauna, also drastically increases cadmium absorption by crops ;
 5. to do their utmost to reduce the level of lead in petrol and in pollutants from certain heavy industries, given its serious effects on human health ;
 6. to take forceful measures at national and international level to reduce the pollution of rivers, not least because such pollution normally in the first place hurts neighbouring countries downstream ;
- b. transmit this recommendation to the Partial Agreement in the Social and Public Health Field for further action, in particular by that body's Committee of Experts on the Health Control of Foodstuffs.