

Response to Stop Poison Poultry report

25 April 2022

The SOIL Association's Stop Poison Poultry report highlights a significant environmental issue that affects communities, workers, and the environment in Brazil. Legitimate concerns are identified by their research concerning the use of highly hazardous pesticides and their connection to soy production. As identified by the authors, the use of these materials is "not the fault of British farmers or retailers, and there are no easy solutions" to addressing their use in animal feed – which is where virtually all Brazilian soy is present within UK retail supply chains (KPMG, 2017).

Since the founding of the Retail Soy Group in 2012, our members have taken a holistic approach to addressing all aspects of sustainable agricultural production and land use. Our efforts to make sustainable soy the norm began with an ardent stride to increase the use of certified soy within livestock feed. This has met some success, but it is also apparent that feed assurance standards need to be improved to address the on the ground issues that are otherwise difficult for retailers to assess. For this reason, the Retail Soy Group has been actively engaged with the European feed industry – FEFAC – and the FEMAS UK feed assurance standard to call on the sector to do more to include all highly hazardous pesticides within the scope of their schemes.

In addition to our work to tighten standards, over the past two years it has become increasingly clear that wider work is needed to engage producers beyond certification to address a range of issues – both environmental and the upholding of human and indigenous rights. The SOIL Association asserts that our priority to identify a workable and scalable solution to deforestation- and conversion-free production has meant that pesticides have not been given due attention. However, the activities we have been engaging in through mapping and engaging the major suppliers and importers of soy to develop novel mechanisms to ensure responsible production are critical components that will be needed to address these challenges too. Our intention has always been to find a successful way to engage with producers on responsible production, and then extending that success to address all areas of concern. Whether this is achieved by certification or through other means remains to be determined through our pilots and experimentation with new mechanisms.

We fully agree with the recommendations that the SOIL Association have suggested for governments to act on to address the use of highly hazardous pesticide production and use. The range of suggestions incorporates the need for action at a global level to ensure there is a market norm in the UK and beyond. It is correct for the SOIL Association to note that retailer action, on its own, will be unsuccessful in addressing the challenge. This is of even greater importance given the unintended consequences of trying to clean the UK-supply chain when less than 1% of global soy production enters this market – we need to move together broadly and in a coordinated way or risk creating niche supply chains that do not address the underlying issues. This movement will only ultimately be successful in changing production practices if global governments work together to control the trade and use of these substances.

Retailers are supportive of calling on governments to do more to restrict the use of these harmful substances. We will also continue to engage with the feed sector, importers, and certification schemes to ensure that the on the ground monitoring and assurance systems are credibly acting to restrict the use of highly hazardous pesticides. By working together we will have the greatest chance of playing our part in addressing this challenge.