

NGO study: Pesticides found in EU wines

The Associated Press

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

BRUSSELS, Belgium: Wines sold in the European Union may contain residues from a number of different pesticides, a study by environmentalist groups showed Wednesday.

The study by Pesticide Action Network Europe and other NGO groups said even expensive wines from world-famous vineyards run the risk of being tainted with toxic or carcinogenic substances.

The groups analyzed 40 bottles of wine purchased in the EU, including six organic wines. They found that each of the 34 conventionally produced wines contained pesticides, including some classified by the EU as health-threatening. Of the six organic wines tested, five contained no pesticides.

"The presence of pesticides in European wines is a growing problem," said Elliott Cannell of PAN Europe. "Many grape farmers are abandoning traditional methods of pest control in favor of using hazardous synthetic pesticides."

The samples included 13 French, 10 German, 10 Austrian, three Italian, one Portuguese, one Australian, one Chilean and one South African wine. Pesticides were found in wines from all of the countries tested.

On average, each bottle of conventionally produced wine contained more than four different pesticides. The study did not specify at what level the substances are harmful to health.

Despite accounting for only 3.5 percent of the EU's agricultural area, grapes receive around 15 percent of synthetic pesticides applied to major crops, according to EU data.

In 2006, the European Commission proposed new rules banning the use of 23 harmful pesticides on food crops in the EU. The plan, which needs approval by EU governments, also seeks to strengthen and simplify the rules for authorizing new pesticides in the EU market.

Notes: