

Statement by the INKOTA network, Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH), Coffee Watch, and Pesticide Action Network (PAN) UK on the German Coffee Association's reaction to our report "Poison in Your Coffee"

We at Coffee Watch, Deutsche Umwelthilfe, INKOTA-netzwerk, and Pesticide Action Network UK, published a report called "[Poison in Your Coffee](#)" on June 19, 2026, about how the coffee industry's pesticide addiction is harming workers, farming communities, and ecosystems. It also exposes how residues of cocktails of pesticides on coffee end up in consumers' cups. This report received widespread media coverage.

On June 26, the German Coffee Association published a statement in response to our report, entitling it: "[Coffee in Germany is safe.](#)" In this response, the Association rejects the findings of our report, characterizing many as a "generalization," and argues for a "more objective approach." However, their own statement is not an objective approach.

Faced with our report documenting farmworkers collapsing from toxic exposure, and ecosystems being contaminated, the German Coffee Association's response is to reassure consumers that the final product is safe for Germans. This framing ignores the far more urgent issue: the health and safety of the people who grow the coffee.

Farmers are mixing paraquat with bare hands, pregnant women entering recently sprayed fields without protective equipment, children are exposed throughout the harvest season, rivers and soils are contaminated with pesticides banned in the EU, biodiversity is threatened. Focusing solely on consumer safety treats the supply chain as a narrow corridor in which only what reaches the German border matters, while everything upstream — human suffering, environmental harm, and collapsing biodiversity — is rendered invisible.

The core concern of Poison in Your Coffee are the rights, dignity, and well-being of the workers whose labour makes that cup possible. It also centers the importance of protecting ecosystems so that future generations can inherit a habitable planet and coffee production is possible despite climate change challenges.

The German Coffee Association's statement fails to acknowledge either workers or nature. By doing that, it is answering a question we didn't ask, and ignoring the one we did. "Safe coffee" cannot mean that cups in Germany are harmless while the people who grow the beans keep getting sick and their environment keeps being poisoned. Moreover, it misrepresents our findings regarding residues which are indeed found in consumers' cups.

The German Coffee Association's Statement "Coffee in Germany is safe" is Misleading

This blanket statement of safety is simply not scientifically tenable – not because we claim otherwise, but because the data is insufficient to support it. The Association's statement does nothing to undermine the available data cited in our report:

- Testing of coffee imports is minimal. Yet evidence shows that pesticide residues, including glyphosate and other Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs), are consistently found on green coffee beans.
- In 2022, EU authorities tested just 44 green coffee samples, and 23% contained pesticides banned in the EU. This represents a tenfold increase since 2011. A sample size this small for a global market with millions of tons of imports is no basis for certifying safety; it shows how inadequate the monitoring really is.
- Between 2020 and 2024, pesticides were the most frequently reported risk associated with coffee in Europe's early-warning system, and coffee itself was among the most flagged products overall, hardly consistent with calling it "safe"
- Regulatory frameworks often tolerate residues of pesticides on imported coffee that would be banned if the coffee was grown at home.
- Washing and roasting coffee reduces some residues, but not others low-volatility and thermally stable compounds can and do survive processing, and monitoring remains inconsistent. The limited residue studies that do exist are concerning:
 - an estimated 1 in 5 cups is likely tainted by pesticide residues
 - 19% of green coffee samples from Brazil, Kenya and Columbia show pesticide residues (many banned already in Europe)
 - 72% of roasted coffee in the US contained AMPA, a glyphosate breakdown product.
 - 21% of roasted samples tested in Egypt contained residues, chlorpyrifos, imidacloprid, and cypermethrin among the most common.
 - Many samples contain several residues at once, a "toxic cocktail" that current single-substance regulatory frameworks aren't equipped to address.
 - study found multi-residue contamination in up to 79% of roasted coffee samples, including mepiquat chloride, permethrin, and methiocarb sulfone.

Declaring coffee "safe" against this backdrop of incomplete testing and repeated risk reports confuses the lack of controls with proof of safety. This is not objectivity, it is the opposite.

We want consumers to have clear, accessible information. Based on the evidence available, testing and monitoring have not been sufficient to establish with certainty that pesticide-grown coffee is safe. It may ultimately prove to be, but that requires far more rigorous research and monitoring than currently exists. We call on regulators and the coffee industry to strengthen both, so consumers can trust that their coffee has been properly evaluated.

The German Coffee Association's Statement Regarding Blanket Bans Misrepresents Our Report

We are accused of calling for a blanket ban on all pesticides in coffee cultivation. This is false – we have never done so, and this insinuation serves primarily to discredit our actual demands. Our position is more precise and straightforward: highly hazardous active ingredients that have already been proven to be harmful to human health or the environment and are banned elsewhere on those grounds, must simply no longer be used -regardless of where in the world.

Referring to "integrated pest management" falls short here, as in practice it is often reduced to replacing one highly dangerous active ingredient with another. This is not a solution, but rather a displacement of the problem. Mere training on "safe application" is also insufficient: a substance that can cause cancer, hormonal imbalances, or miscarriages does not become safe

simply by wearing protective gloves. Various pesticides are also banned because of their environmental toxicity, they seriously harm soil life, water quality and biodiversity including pollinators. Nature that a healthy coffee production is dependent on. What we call for and what is needed is a genuine systemic shift in the industry towards a combination of agroforestry and biological pest control, and an agriculture that strengthens soils and ecosystems instead of harming them.

The German Coffee Association's Statement on "Supply chain responsibility and local support" is insufficient

The German Coffee Association refers to the German Lieferkettensorgfaltspflichtengesetz (LkSG, known in English as the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act) and individual capacity-building initiatives to suggest that the industry is already adequately fulfilling its social and environmental responsibilities. However,

1. Due diligence audits and isolated training programs are no substitute for genuine systemic change. As purchasers, German roasters and retailers wield enormous market power and therefore have a responsibility to use it. What is needed is: binding, verifiable exclusion criteria within their own supply chain; long-term financing of the transition to alternatives; and fair prices that make this transition financially viable for small-scale farmers in the first place. Anything else remains mere symbolic politics.
2. An earlier ranking and [report by DUH and Coffee Watch](#) regarding 21 major German coffee companies' compliance with the LkSG and the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), found wide variations between companies' performance. Companies at the top of the ranking such as Alnatura, JDE, Seeberger, Nestle, and Tchibo appeared to perform far better than J.J. Darboven, Bela, and Dallmayr on compliance with the LkSG and other relevant due diligence legislation. For the German Coffee Association to allege that all German coffee companies are fully compliant with the LkSG in line with best practice, is implausible and simply does not align with data collected.
3. Last but not least, there have been extensive political discussions about eliminating or weakening the LkSG and the EUDR. The German federal government retroactively [abolished](#) external reporting obligations and instructed the Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control (BAFA) to halt regular report reviews and scale back administrative enforcement. Since the German Coffee Association seems to believe the LkSG plays such a useful role, we urge the Association to make its support for robust regulation to the German federal government and BAFA public.

The German Coffee Association's Statement on the export of pesticides ignores powerful market dynamics

The argument that regulation lies solely for sovereign producing countries ignores the fact that German companies like Bayer and BASF manufacture, export, and market these active ingredients abroad even though they are banned in the EU because they are considered too dangerous. Responsibility for regulating the trade of these active ingredients cannot be simply delegated to the producing countries. It is a shared responsibility.

Furthermore, the argument that an export ban would simply lead to the pesticides being sourced from Asia is not an argument against a ban, but rather for internationally coordinated regulation, in which Germany, as the largest EU exporter, should play a leading role, instead of hiding behind the sovereignty of coffee-producing countries.

Conclusion: The challenge is safe coffee – not safe coffee enjoyment in Germany

"Safe coffee" cannot mean that only cups in Germany are harmless, while the people who grow the beans continue to get sick and their environment is poisoned. Though, as discussed above, more research and monitoring is needed to determine whether the cup truly is safe- for the consumer and the producer.

We invite the Association to address these real challenges – with concrete proposals for binding commitments to phase out demonstrably dangerous substances, together with growers and governments, with genuine investment in alternatives, and with a responsibility that doesn't end at its own supply chain, but rather begins there.

At the same time, we cordially invite the German Coffee Association to a joint discussion to talk specifically about the content of the report and to ensure safety for consumers in Germany and workers worldwide, as well as environmentally friendly cultivation and processing methods.