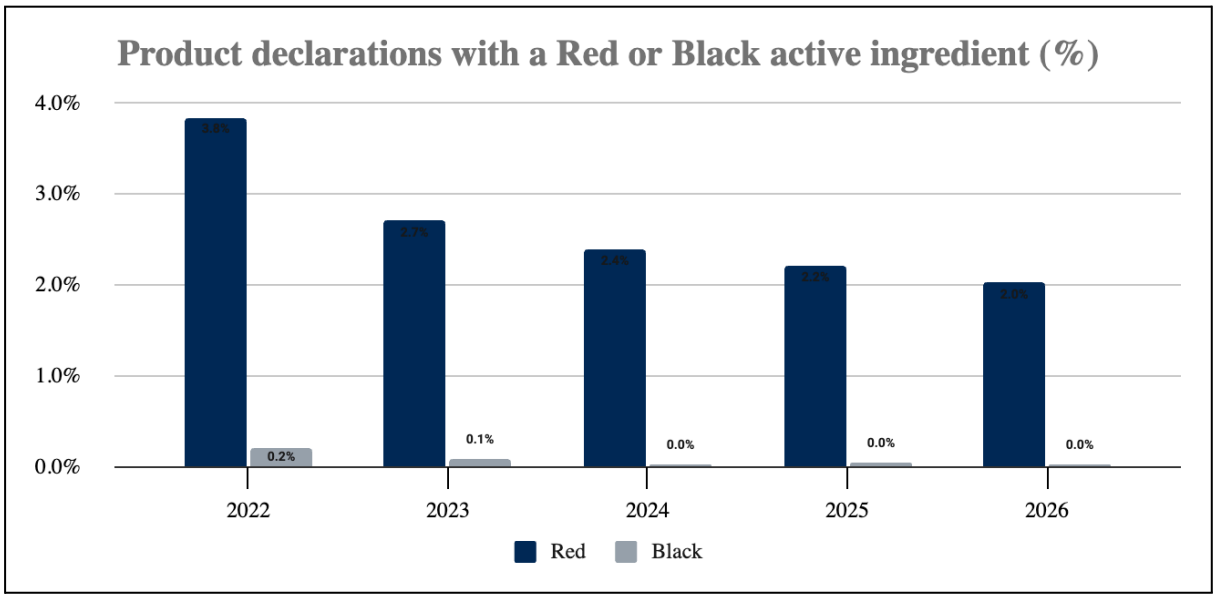
Waitrose Pesticide Usage - Progress Report 2026

Waitrose regularly reviews its performance in reducing harmful pesticides from its supply chains. The 2026 progress report takes into account the last five years of data submitted by growers on their pesticide usage.

1. Waitrose Pesticide Policy (Black, Red and Amber Pesticide Trends)

Share of pesticides listed on PPPL's as Black, Red or Amber Pesticides

Black and Red List Pesticides



Black List: Complete Phase-Out Maintained

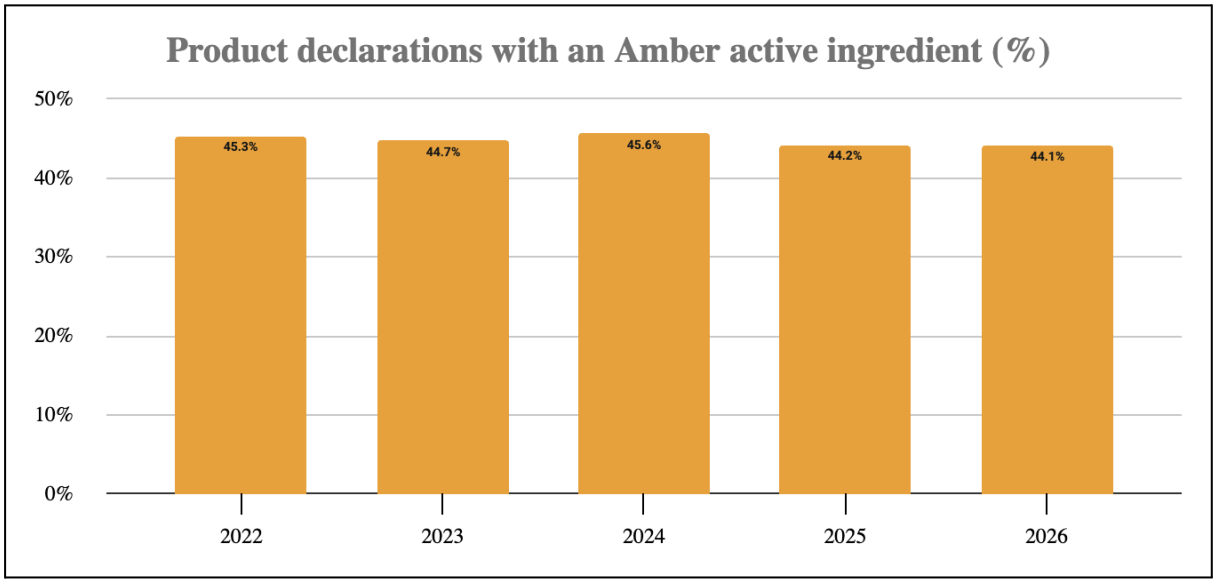
- Finding: Black-listed active substances declined from 0.2% in 2022 down to 0.1% in 2023, and reached 0.0% in 2024, where they have remained through 2025 and 2026.
- Significance: Represents full supply chain adherence to the absolute prohibition mandate, successfully removing the most acutely hazardous chemicals from all submitted Plant Protection Product Lists (PPPLs).

Red List: Consistent, Progressive Reduction

- Finding: Declarations containing at least one Red list active ingredient fell year-on-year from 3.8% in 2022 to 2.0% in 2026—a net reduction of 1.8 percentage points, or nearly half (-47%) of its 2022 level.
- Significance: Directly tracks Waitrose's documented policy objective of seeking continual reductions in Red-listed substances, reflecting effective replacement of high-concern chemicals with safer substitutes across grower programmes.

- The Waitrose target is a 5% year on year reduction in PPPL's containing Red List pesticides. For the years 2022 to 2026 Waitrose has achieved a cumulative 9.4% year on year reduction, exceeding its stated target, despite the Red List being reviewed and expanded in 2024.

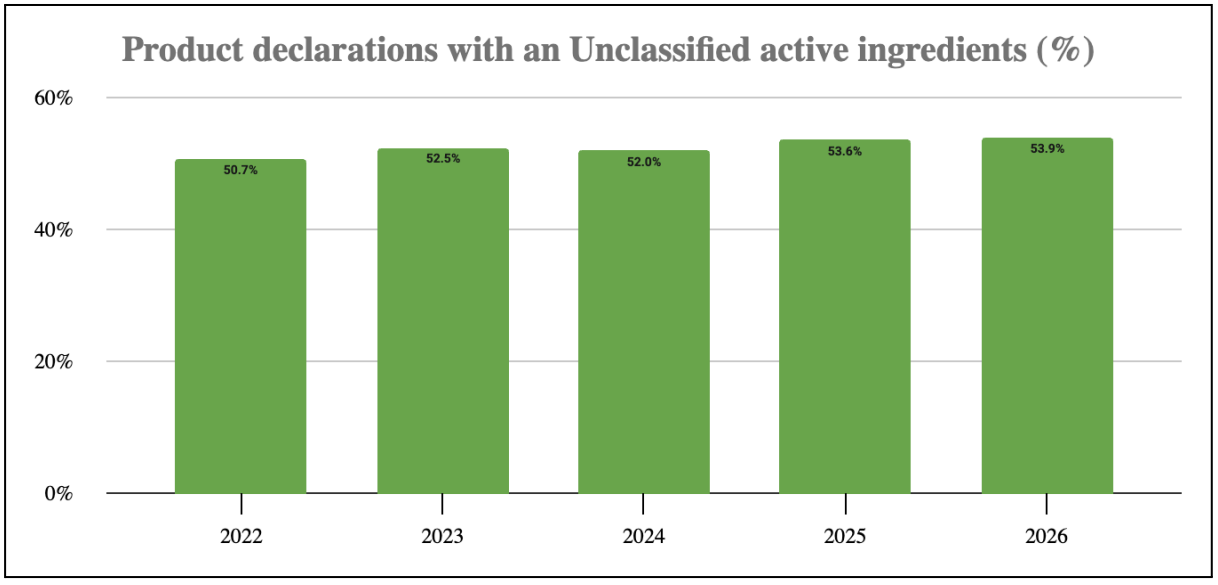
Amber List Pesticides



Amber List: Controlled Stability

- Finding: Amber substances remain present in 44.1% to 45.6% of declarations, showing a minor downward shift from 45.3% in 2022 to 44.1% in 2026.
- Significance: Because Amber includes widely used staple fungicides and insecticides (e.g., Fludioxonil, Imazalil), usage has plateaued at a steady level. Rather than experiencing an abrupt phase-out, these substances remain subject to ongoing monitoring and residue surveillance.

Unclassified (Lower-Risk) Pesticides

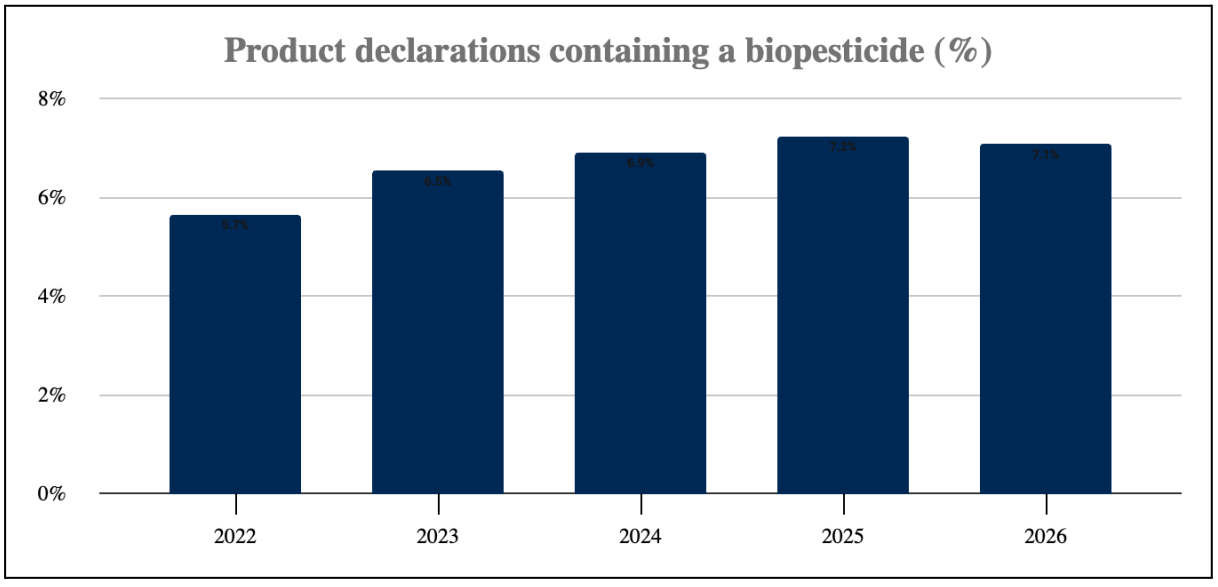


Unclassified (Lower-Risk): Sustained Majority Growth

- Finding: The green chart for unclassified active ingredients demonstrates an upward trend, rising from 50.7% in 2022 to 53.9% in 2026 (+3.2 percentage points).
- Significance: Unclassified substances account for more than half of all product declarations across all five years. Their steady increase mirrors the combined contraction of Black and Red categories, confirming that crop protection programmes are shifting their chemical baseline toward lower-hazard, unclassified choices and biological alternatives.

2. Biopesticides

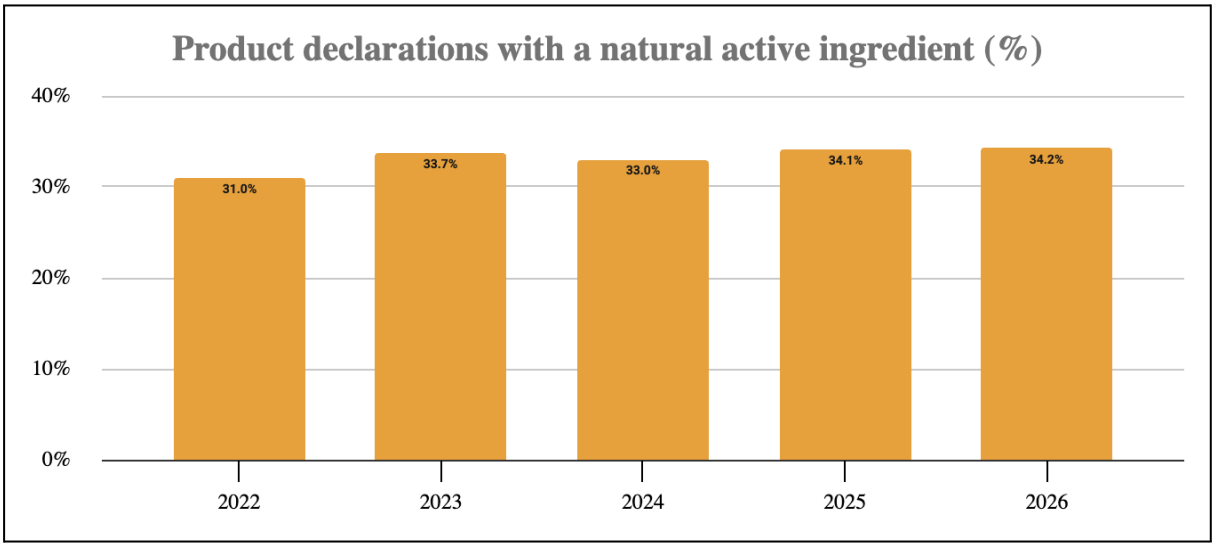
Share of product declarations containing at least one BIO active ingredient.



- Metric: Share of product declarations containing at least one biopesticide (BIO) active ingredient.
- Trend: Usage increased from 5.7% in 2022 to a peak of 7.2% in 2025. In 2026, it stabilized slightly at 7.1%.
- Key Takeaway: Demonstrates a net positive growth of +1.4 percentage points over 5 years, reflecting increased adoption of biological alternatives.

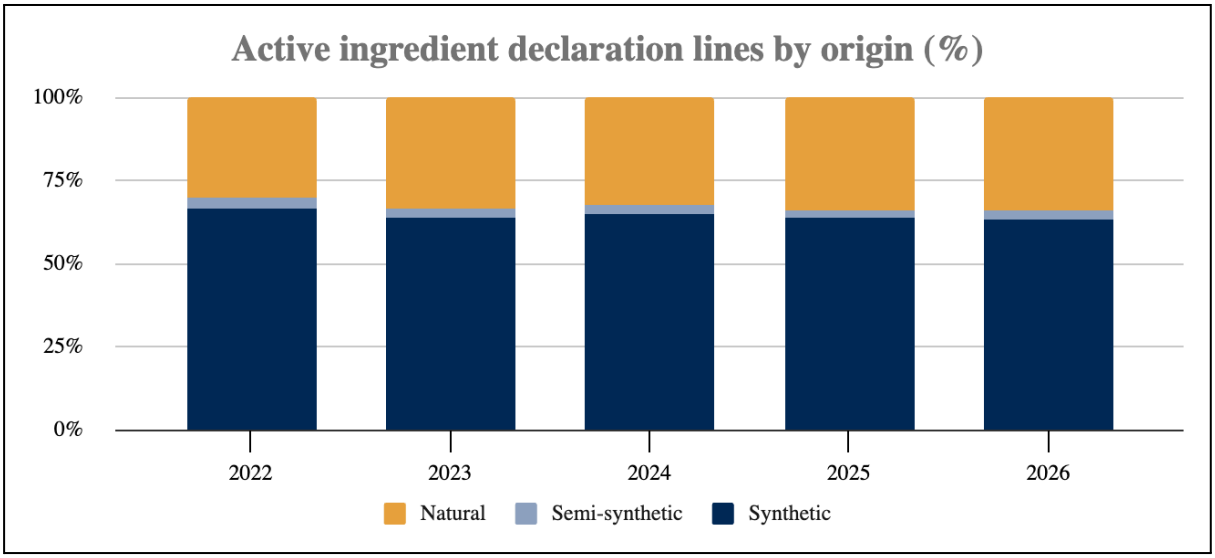
3. Non-synthetic active ingredients

Chart 1: Product Declarations with a Natural Active Ingredient (%)



- Metric: Share of Plant Protection Product declarations containing at least one natural (non-synthetic) active substance.
- Key Observations:Upward Trajectory: The proportion of product declarations utilising natural substances rose from 31.0% in 2022 to 34.2% in 2026, representing an overall net increase of +3.2 percentage points (a ~10.3% relative expansion).
- Adoption Baseline: Roughly one in every three product declarations across the supply chain now incorporates at least one natural active substance.

Chart 2: Active Ingredient Declaration Lines by Origin (%)



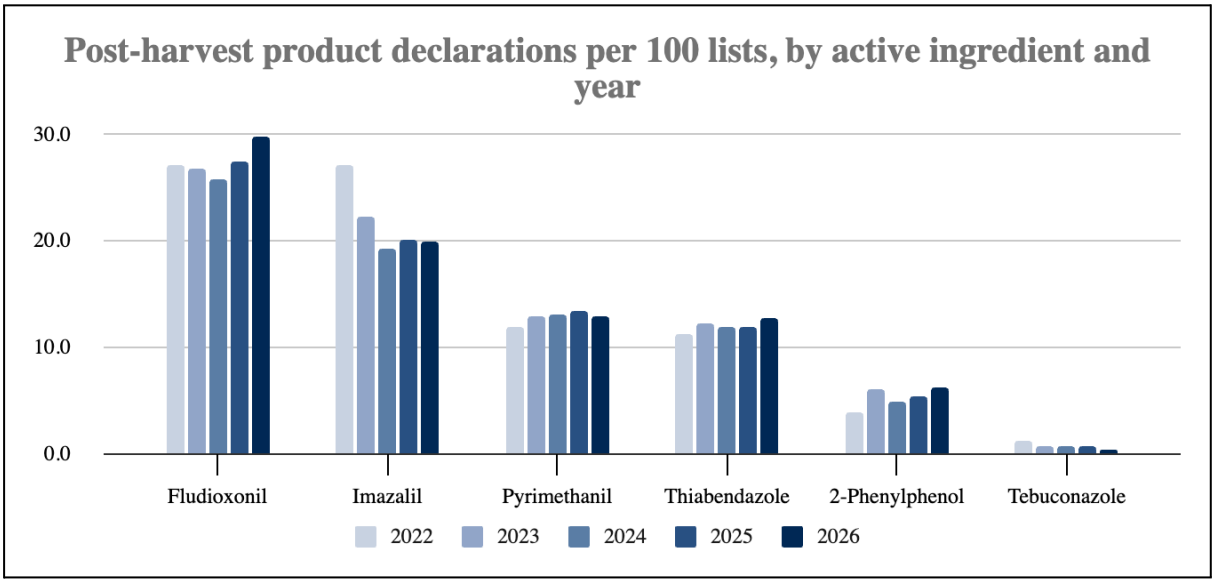
- Metric: A 100% stacked breakdown of all individual active ingredient lines declared across all lists, classified by substance origin (PPDB / BPDB pesticide database classifications).

Key Takeaways:

1. Shift Away from Pure Synthetics:
    - Synthetic active ingredients have dropped from 63.4% in 2022 to 59.8% in 2026. This marks a notable structural milestone, bringing synthetic chemistry lines below the 60% mark for the first time in the recorded period.
2. Expansion of Natural Alternatives:
    - Natural lines grew from 29.1% to 32.1% of all declared ingredient lines, directly absorbing most of the share lost by synthetic and semi-synthetic products.
3. Strategic Alignment:
    - Both charts confirm a steady supply-chain shift toward non-synthetic options, complementing the rise in biopesticides observed in Section 3 and reinforcing the gradual transition toward lower-hazard crop protection inputs.

4. Post Harvest Pesticide Usage

Share of pesticides listed on PPPL's for post harvest usage



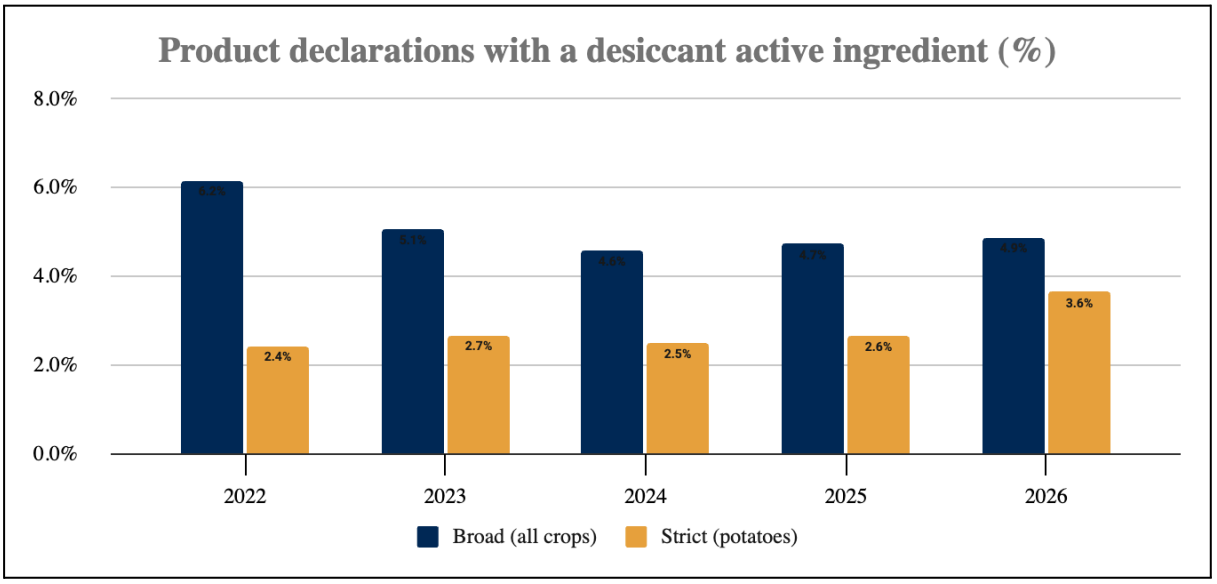
- Metric: Post-harvest declarations per 100 lists by specific active ingredient.

- Key Ingredients & Trends:
    - Fludioxonil: Remained the most declared post-harvest active ingredient. After staying between 25.8 and 27.5 from 2022 to 2025, it rose to 29.7 per 100 lists in 2026.
    - Imazalil: Decreased substantially from tied-first in 2022 (27.1 per 100 lists) down to 20.0 per 100 lists in 2026 (a ~26% decrease).
    - Pyrimethanil & Thiabendazole: Moderate and stable usage across all five years, fluctuating narrowly between 11.8 and 13.4 and 11.3 and 12.8 per 100 lists, respectively.
    - 2-Phenylphenol: Remained relatively low, varying between 3.95 (2022) and 6.28 (2026).
    - Tebuconazole: Consistently the lowest post-harvest active ingredient, dropping from 1.13 in 2022 to 0.43 in 2026.

- **Key Takeaway:**

  Fludioxonil is replacing Imazalil as a post harvest pesticide. Whilst Fludioxonil is not entirely without ecological or long-term data gaps (particularly regarding soil metabolites and mild endocrine interactions), it does not carry the severe carcinogen or developmental toxin warnings that Imazalil does.

5. Pre-harvest desiccants



Broad Scope (All Crops): Overall Downward Trend with Recent Stabilization
Broad desiccant usage dropped from 6.2% of product declarations in 2022 to a low of 4.6% in 2024.
It experienced a slight uptick in 2025 (4.7%) and 2026 (4.9%) mainly due to increased usage on potatoes, representing an overall net reduction of 1.3 percentage points compared to 2022.

Strict Scope (Potatoes): Long-Term Drop Followed by Recent Uptick
Long-Term Drop: Strictly confirmed potato desiccant declarations saw a steep reduction over the long term, falling from 9.2% in 2015 down to 2.4% in 2022.
Recent Shift: Between 2022 and 2025, usage remained steady in the 2.4%–2.7% range before increasing to 3.6% in 2026 (+1.2 percentage points relative to 2022).

The UK potato sector is currently navigating a highly volatile period driven by a strict post-diquat chemical regulatory environment and severe climatic disruptions, exemplified by the punishing 2026 summer drought. Following the ban of fast-acting chemical desiccants, growers stabilized their management using alternative mechanical methods and slower contact herbicides; however, the compressed and delayed harvest window caused by the 2026 drought forced a sudden spike in desiccant product declarations to 3.6% as farmers relied on aggressive, split-dose chemical applications to rapidly force tuber skin-set and protect stressed yields from late-season blight.

6. Key Insights

1. Effective Elimination of "Black List" (Prohibited) Pesticides

Waitrose's policy classifies active ingredients into distinct hazard categories (Black, Red, Amber, and Unclassified). Black list substances represent the highest-risk/prohibited active ingredients targeted for immediate exclusion.

Near-Zero Presence: Under the June 2024 policy framework, Black list pesticides account for 0.0% (rounded) of product declarations in almost every evaluated year.

Historical Records: Out of 373,612 total active ingredient declaration lines tracked across 2015–2026, only 162 lines (0.04%) triggered Black list classifications (e.g., 22 declarations in 2022, 52 in 2023, 23 in 2024, 45 in 2025, and 20 in 2026). Despite being declared on Proposed Pesticide Lists these were removed by growers at Waitrose's request.

Strict Compliance: Even as the number of reviewed Plant Protection Product Lists (PPPLs) expanded significantly (from 6 lists in 2015 to 1,834 in 2025), Black list active ingredients remained practically non-existent.

2. Continuous Downward Trend in "Red List" (Restricted) Pesticides

Red list pesticides represent restricted HHPs subject to phase-out schedules and targeted reduction plans.

Proportional Decline: Measured on a uniform June 2024 policy basis, the percentage of product declarations containing Red list pesticides decreased from 8.4% in 2017 to 2.0% in 2026.

Impact of Policy Upgrades: When Waitrose updated its policy in June 2024 to reclassify additional active ingredients into higher restriction tiers, actual supplier usage of Red list substances continued to fall year-over-year.

3. Shift Towards Safer, Natural, and Biopesticide Alternatives

As chemical HHPs are restricted, Waitrose's supply chain shows an increasing reliance on unclassified active ingredients, biological control agents, and non-synthetic compounds.

Rise in Unclassified / Non-Restricted Active Ingredients: Product declarations with no listed restricted active ingredients increased from 34.4% in 2015 (77 declarations) to 54.0% in 2026 (39,817 declarations).

Growth in Biopesticides: Product declarations containing biopesticides (BIO active ingredients) increased from 5.7% in 2022 to 7.1% in 2026.

Transition from Synthetic to Natural Inputs: Between 2022 and 2026:

Synthetic inputs dropped from 63.4% of active ingredient lines in 2022 to 59.8% in 2026.

Natural inputs rose from 29.1% in 2022 to 32.1% in 2026.

Waitrose is making steady progress toward safer, more sustainable agriculture by eliminating Black-listed pesticides, reducing Red-listed pesticide declarations, and expanding biopesticide adoption.