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Parents’ groups in France seek a 500-meter pesticide ban around schools near vineyards

They cite a public health study saying more than 500,000 students attend schools within 500 meters of vineyards

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Parents’ associations in southwestern France are asking the government to ban the use of conventional pesticides in vineyards within 500 meters of schools, arguing that children in wine-growing areas face elevated exposure risks.

On Monday, November 23, FCPE Gironde and FCPE Charente, local branches of a major French public-school parents' federation, said they had formally put the state on notice and were seeking a change in the rules. The groups said they sent a preliminary administrative request on November 19 to the ministers of agriculture, ecological transition, health and the economy, as well as to the prefects of Gironde and Charente.

The request calls for a prohibition on conventional pesticide spraying in vineyards located less than 500 meters from schools. The parents' groups said their demand is based on the 2021-2022 PestiRiv study, in which France's food and health agencies, Anses and Santé publique France, observed higher pesticide exposure among people living in wine-growing areas, specifically those living within 500 meters of vineyards.

The associations said the issue goes far beyond a small number of schools. According to figures they cited, more than 4,500 educational establishments were located within 500 meters of vineyards in 2025. That total included 3,803 primary schools, 447 middle schools and 258 high schools. The groups said those schools served more than 500,000 students who could be potentially overexposed.

Their move adds pressure to a politically sensitive debate in France over pesticide use near homes and public buildings. In this case, the focus is on vineyards, which in many parts of the country are closely integrated with towns and villages. That means any future widening of no-spray zones could have implications beyond public health policy. It could also affect how winegrowers manage disease and pest pressure in vineyards near populated areas, with potential consequences for production conditions across parts of the wine sector.

The parents' groups framed their action as the first stage of a broader campaign. They said they are preparing a second preliminary request for 2027 at the national level, and that signatures are being opened to all parents concerned by the issue.

The current initiative links two well-known wine departments, Gironde, home to Bordeaux vineyards, and Charente, a region tied to Cognac production. A 500-meter exclusion rule would therefore touch areas where vine growing is central to the local economy as well as to France's broader drinks industry.

The groups did not present the proposed restriction as a targeted measure for a single school or municipality. Instead, they asked for a regulatory change that would apply to vineyards near schools more broadly. By grounding the request in national public health research and school location data, they appear to be building a case for wider legal and administrative action rather than a local accommodation.

No response from the ministries or prefects was included in the groups’ Monday statement. The next step will depend on whether the government is willing to revise existing rules or whether the parents’ organizations decide to pursue further legal action after their formal request.