



Outrage as EFSA again ‘greenlights’ glyphosate despite data gaps and outstanding issues

Thursday 6 of June 2023 - The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) today gave shocking [positive advice](#) to move forward with the prolongation of the use of Europe's most widely used herbicide glyphosate despite a series of data gaps and outstanding issues. In its conclusions, it highlights that the potential genotoxicity of impurities and consumers risk assessment remained incomplete. The potential of glyphosate products to cause developmental neurotoxicity and harm the microbiome and biodiversity is clearly recognised. Nevertheless, EFSA proposes to continue with the approval process by sending the ball to the field of Member States.

EFSA, similar to ECHA and the national agencies, base their assessments predominantly on industry studies. The deeply flawed EU pesticide authorisation system neglects a wealth of independent and peer-reviewed scientific studies that link glyphosate to severe health and environmental problems. Many studies prove that glyphosate is genotoxic, neurotoxic, damages the gut microbiome and causes serious damage to soil, aquatic life and biodiversity.

A broad coalition of NGOs and Trade Unions in the 'Stop Glyphosate' coalition calls on the European Commission to propose a ban and on Member States to support this. The renewed authorisation for 5 years in 2017 was already highly contested, including [a successful European Citizens Initiative](#). Many EU politicians, like French President Macron, promised to use the 5 years to work on a phase-out. European citizens in the meantime— expressed in another ECI [Save Bees and Farmers](#), in food barometers and in [the Future of Europe report](#) that politicians need to deliver.

To back up their call, the Stop Glyphosate coalition today launches a new website [stopglyphosate.eu](#). This gives an overview of state-of-the-art independent (scientific) information and procedures as a reliable and independent platform on the infamous weedkiller. It empowers citizens to expose the hidden truth of glyphosate to their elected politicians.

After many years of debate, it is crystal clear that the EU authorisation system still fails to protect human health and the environment, the aim of the EU-pesticide legislation (Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009). EFSA's advice is a slap in the face of many independent scientists, who since [the assessment by the cancer agency IARC in 2015](#) (the link to cancer and genotoxicity in humans is still valid [i]), have published [many scientific studies](#) showing the toxicity of glyphosate, still the world's most used herbicide[ii], which accounts for 30% of all herbicide use in the EU[iii].

It is also a slap in the face of all citizens, as well as those policymakers who see the need to protect biodiversity (and the future of food production), farm workers' health and safety and reduce overall pesticide use and glyphosate specifically [iv]. A prolongation of glyphosate would be in direct conflict with the 50% EU pesticide reduction target of the EU Biodiversity and in the Farm to Fork Strategy [v] (SUR proposal) and [the Declaration of Montreal after the COP15 on Biodiversity](#).



Angeliki Lysimachou, Head of Science and Policy at PAN Europe said:

“The glyphosate scandal continues. The positive response of EFSA to proceed despite acknowledged data gaps and shortcomings in glyphosate’s evaluation undermines public trust in European institutions which have a role in safeguarding the health of citizens and the environment. While EFSA acknowledges that glyphosate products can harm biodiversity, be neurotoxic and affect the microbiome it refrains from providing a negative opinion and instead shifts the responsibility to Member States, who never examine the long-term human toxicity of their products despite the requirements of the EU law.”

“We are deeply concerned about the whole process so far, in which all actors involved, not just EFSA, but also ECHA, the four rapporteur member states and their agencies, do not ensure the high levels of protection foreseen by EU law. From cancer, neurotoxicity, impact on the microbiome, soil health, bees and ecosystems, our regulators turn their back on all the potential harms reported following glyphosate exposure.”

Peter Clausing, scientist at PAN Germany said:

“As a recent [scandal](#) called Pestgate showed - EU citizens are not protected against the neurotoxic effects of pesticides. Pesticide producers withheld studies on neurotoxicity in the EU authorization procedure. And next to this unacceptable secrecy, independent science is still not taken adequately into consideration.”

Hans van Scharen, a researcher at Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) said:

“This will make the agrochemical multinationals and their shareholders pop champagne bottles, but will hurt people and the planet. People are sick of glyphosate, and we’re sick of being lied to. How could EFSA give glyphosate a thumbs-up based on primarily shoddy, corporate-led scientific studies, when IARC and after that many other scientists warned that it's genotoxic, and probably cancer-causing too? Not to mention biodiversity. We now again see what we already knew: the EU pesticide authorisation-system is not fit-for-purpose. The purpose being to protect people and the environment. The system is toxic itself.”

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Notes to the Editor:

[i]1 In March 2015, [IARC classified glyphosate](#) as “probably carcinogenic to humans” (Group 2A). This was based on “limited” evidence of cancer in humans (from real-world exposures that actually occurred) and “sufficient” evidence of cancer in experimental animals (from studies of “pure” glyphosate). IARC also concluded that there was “strong” evidence for genotoxicity, both for “pure” glyphosate and for glyphosate formulations.

[ii] 2 According to [global market surveys](#) the [global glyphosate market](#) was estimated between US\$7.6 and 9.3 Billion in 2020 and is projected to reach between 10.6 and 17.7 Billion in 2030, with projected annual growth rates of between 3.0% and 6%. As demonstrated [alternatives to glyphosate are available for all uses](#)

[iii] 3 Evidence on human health is overwhelming - exposure to glyphosate has been linked to serious diseases in humans (e.g. rise of [cancer biomarkers](#) and disruption in the [microbiome](#)). IARC’s epidemiological assessment of cancer and genotoxicity assessment was recently confirmed by the [French institute INSERM](#). Moreover, a [HEAL report](#) published in June 2022 shows the scientific evidence proving that glyphosate is carcinogenic has so far been dismissed in the EU scientific assessment. This report closely examined the 11 rats and mice studies provided by pesticide companies in 2019 as part of the application dossier. In 10 out of 11 studies, tumours were observed with a link to glyphosate treatment. Additionally, the public scientific literature also links glyphosate exposure to a number of serious diseases. For example, recent studies show that glyphosate and glyphosate products can be [neurotoxic](#) and may contribute to the [development of Parkinson’s disease](#), can cause kidney disease and disrupt the [human and animal microbiome](#). Maternal exposure to glyphosate has also been linked to [spontaneous deliveries with shortened gestational length](#) and abnormal development of [reproductive organs in newborns](#).

[iv] 4 Glyphosate’s fate in the environment is well documented by state-of-the-art science. Glyphosate damages the ecosystems including pollinators and beneficial insects, earthworms, and soil biota, and causes direct harm to agriculture. It [disrupts soil microbiome](#) - glyphosate can alter the endophytic and rhizosphere microbiome of plants, which can weaken the defence of the plants via decreased antimicrobial production against pathogen attacks. It is dangerous to the aquatic environment - Both glyphosate and its metabolite AMPA [pose risks](#) to aquatic environments and glyphosate is already [classified](#) as being toxic to aquatic life with long-lasting effects (Aquatic Chronic 2; H411), although a stricter classification would be justified based on data from the scientific literature.

[v] 5 Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide that kills not only unwanted weeds, but all plants, as well as algae, bacteria and fungi, thereby having an unacceptable impact on biodiversity and the ecosystem. [In a 2016 Resolution, the European Parliament](#) had already pointed out that “as such, glyphosate fails to comply with point (e)(iii) of Article 4(3) of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009”.