

EU Commission Plays “Brussels Roulette” on Monsanto’s Glyphosate

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The EU Commission is clearly determined to approve a “probable human carcinogen”, glyphosate, despite overwhelming evidence of its toxicity. They are clearly content to side with Monsanto and the agribusiness chemical weed-killer lobby and with Washington above the health and safety concerns of EU citizens. A legal mind might call this criminal negligence. The issue is the upcoming renewal of the license to use the probable carcinogen, glyphosate, the main ingredient in Monsanto’s widely-used weed-killer, Roundup®. The intensity of the lies and attempted deception by EU faceless bureaucrats on the controversial glyphosate issue is indicative why more EU citizens are demanding an “opt-out” entirely from the European Union.

Earlier this year, the EU Commission had recommended re-approval for another 15-years of the license for the controversial glyphosate. They declared that their “yes” decision was based on the determination by the EU’s European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) that there was no reason to believe glyphosate is a carcinogen.

That determination, not even backed up by open disclosure of the relevant health and safety studies EFSA claimed to rely on, went totally against the 2015 determination by the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) that glyphosate, the weed-killer used in most every GMO plant worldwide and most other crops and even home gardens as well, was a “probable human carcinogen.” In lay terms that means odds greater than 50% are that it causes human cancers on exposure, which has been tested in ordinary drinking water or in food crops sprayed with Roundup or other glyphosate-based weed-killers.

EFSA, basing its view solely on a report by Germany’s Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), which in turn took it from a clearly biased report by Monsanto and other agrochemical industry groups, said it is “unlikely” to pose a cancer risk. IARC used only data that was in the public domain, but the corrupt German BfR based its report on secret industry studies that it refused to release to IARC or to the [public](#).

Public pressure, the objections of several EU states and an EU-wide petition signed by more than one million EU citizens demanding an end to glyphosate use as well as a letter of protest signed by almost one hundred leading scientists to EU Health and Food Safety Commissioner (also known as DG SANTE) Vytenis Andriukaitis, led to a statement by Andriukaitis in early April suggesting a new sensitivity to the clear desire of people not to be willfully exposed to cancer agents in their food or drinking water from the widespread spraying of [glyphosate](#).

Now, only two weeks later, the same unhealthy EU Health bureaucrat, Andriukaitis, has again flipped. On April 26, the DG SANTE commissioner met with leaders of the bloc of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament. In the meeting, displaying callous disregard of any proposals for restrictions on the dangerous weed-killer, Andriukaitis announced his plan to re-authorize glyphosate for ten years without any specific [restrictions](#).

Washington strongarm tactics on EU Commission

Notably, EU Health and Food Safety Commissioner Andriukaitis went to Washington in December, 2015 where he met with US Trade Representative Michael Froman. According to internal EU Commission documents of that Washington meeting, obtained by several NGOs under the Freedom of Information Law, Washington strongly pushed Andriukaitis to exempt plants and animals produced through “gene-editing” and other new techniques from existing EU GMO rules. As Greenpeace EU food policy director Franziska Achterberg said: “The Commission must recognise that gene-editing is genetic engineering.” The name change is yet another deception being attempted by Washington and Monsanto’s GMO cabal to bypass rigorous safety tests and [labelling](#).

The documents show that Washington wants the EU to drop all health and environmental safeguards on GMOs to pave the way for a transatlantic trade agreement (TTIP). The next round of TTIP negotiations started on 25 April in New York. EU Health Commissioner Andriukaitis’ rush to ram through a re-licensing of glyphosate in May is clearly another reflection of immense Washington pressure on the unaccountable EU Commission bureaucracy. It’s known as the “[democratic deficit](#).”

Not surprising then that DG SANTE’s Andriukaitis entirely ignored the parliament’s majority vote early in April, passed by 374 votes in favor to 225 votes against, of several restrictions on glyphosate based on the “precautionary principle.” That principle states if there is any serious question of human or animal risk, err on the side of caution. A majority of members of the advisory European Parliament voted to recommend a cut in re-licensing duration from 15 years to 7. Further, they called for significant restrictions on glyphosate use:

- No approval of non-professional use
- No approval in or close to public parks/playgrounds/gardens
- No approval where integrated pest management systems are sufficient for necessary weed control
- Strict limitations on pre-harvest applications (desiccation), which are deemed unacceptable

According to groups such as the UK Soil Association and the GMO watchdog group, Sustainable Pulse, the EU Parliament resolution demands strict limits on ‘pre-harvest’ applications of glyphosate on crops. This refers to the practice of spraying crops up to two weeks before harvest to ‘desiccate’ the plants and make harvesting easier. Such pre-harvest application of glyphosate is a route for human exposure to glyphosate via the harvested crop. Currently glyphosate formulations are licenced for a wide range of crops including wheat, barley, oats, oilseed rape (canola), linseed, field beans and peas. This use of glyphosate is believed to be the main source of the toxic glyphosate herbicide and its residues in [bread](#).

This European Parliament vote is non-binding on the Commission and EU member states, but carries moral weight. Now the moral balance rests with the various EU member states. The EU member states take the final glyphosate vote in May. The stakes are huge. An EU ban on glyphosate could well sound the death knell for Genetically Modified agriculture worldwide. Now wouldn't that be a healthy turn?

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