

# Menace on the Menu in Post-EU Britain

By [Colin Todhunter](#)

Global Research, February 10, 2020

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [History](#)

*Environmentalist Dr Rosemary Mason has just written the report '[Bayer Crop Science rules Britain after Brexit – the public and the press are being poisoned by pesticides](#)'. It has been sent to editors of major media outlets in the UK. In it, she outlines her concerns for pesticide regulation, health and the environment in a post-Brexit landscape. This article presents some of the report's key points.*

PM Boris Johnson is planning to do a trade deal with the US that could see the gutting of food and environment standards. However, Johnson recently suggested that the UK will be “governed by science, not mumbo-jumbo” on food imports. He has called for an end to “hysterical” fears about US food coming to the UK as part of a post-Brexit trade deal.

In a speech setting out his goals for trade after Brexit, he talked up the prospect of an agreement with Washington and downplayed the need for one with Brussels – if the EU insists the UK must stick to its regulatory regime. In other words, he wants to ditch EU regulations.

Just as concerning is who has the ear of government. Rosemary Mason notes that, in February 2019, at a Brexit meeting on the UK chemicals sector, UK regulators and senior officials from government departments listened to the priorities of the Bayer Crop Science Division. During the meeting (Westminster Energy, Environment & Transport Forum Keynote Seminar: Priorities for UK chemicals sector – challenges, opportunities and the future for regulation post-Brexit), Janet Williams, head of regulatory science at Bayer Crop Science Division, made her priorities for agricultural chemical manufacturers known.

Dave Bench was also a speaker. Bench is a senior scientist at the UK Chemicals, Health and Safety Executive and director of the agency's EU exit plan and has previously stated that the regulatory system for pesticides is robust and balances the risks of pesticides against the benefits to society.

In a recent open letter to Bench, Mason states:

“That statement is rubbish. It is for the benefit of the agrochemical industry. The industry (for it is the industry that does the testing, on behalf of regulators) only tests one pesticide at a time, whereas farmers spray a cocktail of pesticides, including over children and babies, without warning.”

Furthermore, Mason has presented to him and other officials statistics on the spiralling rates of disease and illness among the UK public which correlate with the increasing use of agrochemicals, especially glyphosate.

While the UK was officially no longer part of the EU as of 1 February 2020, it will continue to

follow EU rules on pesticide authorisations during a transition period lasting at least until 31 December 2020. But when the transition period ends, the UK could choose to go its own way, with major implications for several significant pesticides, including glyphosate and neonicotinoids.

In her new report, Mason discusses the health dangers of glyphosate, the world's most widely used herbicide and an active ingredient in Monsanto's Roundup and numerous other products. These dangers (along with corrupt practices that have kept it on the market) have been documented many times in Mason's various open letters to officials.

Glyphosate is authorised in the EU until 2022. Reauthorisation will therefore be considered after the end of the Brexit transition period. Luxembourg is now phasing out its use and will become the first EU country to permanently ban glyphosate. EU countries only narrowly approved its reauthorisation in 2017. The exit of the UK from the soon to be 27-country bloc could tip the voting scales against the substance in 2022.

On the other hand, however, Mason concludes that it is highly likely that the UK will authorise the continued use of glyphosate given the influence of industry.

As for neonicotinoids – seed-coating insecticides that have been linked to harming to bees – Mason concludes that it is difficult to say whether the UK would stick to its most recent position in favour of a ban on clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam. She advises officials to take notice of Dr Henk Tennekes' toxicological studies on systemic neonicotinoid insecticides from 2010. Tennekes says that unwarranted product defence by Bayer and Syngenta may have had catastrophic consequences for the environment.

## Human health and glyphosate

Boris Johnson said on 3 February 2020:

“I look at the Americans, they look pretty well nourished to me. And I don't hear any of these critics of American food coming back from the United States and complaining... So, let's take some of the paranoia out of this argument.”

Mason's response is that to judge the health of a nation by claiming “they look well nourished to me” is pure nonsense: the US has the most obese citizens in the world and Britain has the second. In her numerous reports over the past 10 years, she has been consistently documenting a major public health crisis which is affecting both countries as a result of the chemical contamination of food and crops.

Of course, with a US trade deal in the pipeline, there are major concerns about GMOs, chlorinated chickens and the lowering of food standards across the board. But for Mason, glyphosate is a big concern.

US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) tests found glyphosate on 63 percent of corn samples and 67 percent of soybean samples. But the FDA did not test any oats and wheat, the two main crops where glyphosate is used as a pre-harvest drying agent, resulting in glyphosate contamination of foods such as Cheerios and some brands of granola.

Olga Naidenko, senior science advisor for children's health at the Environment Working

Group (EWG) has responded by saying:

“FDA’s failure to test for glyphosate in the foods where it’s most likely to be found is inexcusable.”

In August, [tests commissioned by EWG](#) found glyphosate residues on popular oat cereals, oatmeal, granola and snack bars. Almost three-fourths of the 45 samples tested had glyphosate levels higher than what EWG scientists consider protective of children’s health with an adequate margin of safety.

Mason says that glyphosate causes epigenetic changes in humans and animals: diseases skip a generation. Washington State University researchers have found a variety of diseases and other health problems in the second- and third-generation offspring of rats exposed to glyphosate. In the first study of its kind, the researchers saw descendants of exposed rats developing prostate, kidney and ovarian diseases, obesity and birth abnormalities.

Writing in the journal *Scientific Reports*, the researchers say they saw “dramatic increases” in several pathologies affecting the second and third generations. The second generation had “significant increases” in testis, ovary and mammary gland diseases, as well as obesity. In third-generation males, the researchers saw a 30 percent incidence of prostate disease — three times the rate of a control population. The third generation of females had a 40 percent incidence of kidney disease, or four times the rate of the controls.

More than one-third of the second-generation mothers had unsuccessful pregnancies, with most of those affected dying. Two out of five males and females in the third generation were obese.

Mason notes that researchers call this phenomenon “generational toxicology” and they’ve seen it over the years in fungicides, pesticides, jet fuel, the plastics compound bisphenol A, the insect repellent DEET and the herbicide atrazine. At work are epigenetic changes that turn genes on and off, often because of environmental influences.

Glyphosate has been the subject of numerous studies about its health effects. This recent study is the third in the past few months out of Washington alone. A study published in February found the chemical increased the risk of non-Hodgkin lymphoma by as much as 41 percent. A Washington State University study published in December found state residents living close to areas subject to treatments with the herbicide are one-third more likely to die an early death from Parkinson’s disease.

This research adds to long-held health-related concerns about glyphosate.

Robert F Kennedy Jr, one of the attorney’s fighting Bayer (which has bought Monsanto) in the US courts, has explained that for four decades Monsanto manoeuvred to conceal Roundup’s carcinogenicity by capturing regulatory agencies, corrupting public officials, bribing scientists and engaging in scientific fraud to delay its day of reckoning. He says that Monsanto also faces cascading scientific evidence linking glyphosate to a constellation of other injuries that have become prevalent since its introduction, including obesity, depression, Alzheimer’s, ADHD, autism, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s, kidney disease, inflammatory bowel disease, brain, breast and prostate cancer, miscarriage, birth defects and declining sperm counts.

Moreover, strong science suggests glyphosate is the culprit in the exploding epidemics of celiac disease, colitis, gluten sensitivities, diabetes and non-alcoholic liver cancer which, for the first time, is attacking children as young as 10.

Nevertheless, Mason notes, senior officials in the UK trot out platitudes about glyphosate being harmless and refer to flawed procedures and biased assessments that overlooked key studies.

With these health issues in mind, we should remind ourselves of Boris Johnson's first speech to parliament as PM. In it, he said:

“Let's start now to liberate the UK's extraordinary bioscience sector from anti-genetic modification rules...”

This could mean the irresponsible introduction of genetically modified Roundup Ready food crops to the UK, which would see the amount of glyphosate in British food reaching new levels (levels which are already disturbing).

In finishing, it is worth mentioning that Mason makes some very pertinent points about the Conservative government in the UK, accusing it of working hand in glove with Monsanto and now Bayer. Yet, as IG Farben, Bayer collaborated with the Nazis and had a factory and prisoner of war camp at Auschwitz. For Mason, the fact that the UK media remain silent on this and has run smear campaigns about Labour and Jeremy Corbyn being anti-semitic is as disgraceful as it is hypocritical.

The UK media do not mention the US lawsuits against Monsanto-Bayer and all the diseases that Roundup brings. The media also ignore every report Mason sends to them in the hope mainstream journalists will inform the public of the dangers of pesticides and pressurise the government to act.

In the meantime, Boris Johnson is attempting to soften up the public on behalf of the corporate interests he represents. Based on no science (or scruples) whatsoever, Johnson says US citizens are fit and healthy and dismisses valid science-based concerns about the food system as “mumbo jumbo” and hysteria. He hopes the public will fall for his knockabout schtick and will remain blissfully ignorant of the reality. With the media's compliance, the majority of people may well do.

*Readers are urged to [read Rosemary Mason's new report](#), which contains all relevant references and additional information to that which has been outlined in this article. It can be accessed on the [academia.edu](#) website along with [dozens of her previous reports](#).*

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