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Glyphosate is back on the EP agenda with a clear message from citizens to stand against the use of the substance

On Thursday 8th September, the Committee on Petitions of the European Parliament examined three petitions opposing the use of the systemic herbicide glyphosate. These petitions were submitted against the backdrop of the recent decision imposed by the Commission to grant a temporary 18 month 'technical extension' of the EU approval of the herbicide, despite the proposal having failed to secure the support of the necessary qualified majority of EU governments. In making this decision, the Commission totally disregarded the opposition from the public and EU governments to this controversial and toxic herbicide.

Glyphosate has been assessed by the WHO as probably carcinogenic. EFSA studies contradict this result but these have to date been restricted from view. Green MEPs requested access to the 182 documents, on which EFSA's controversial assessment was based, as out of 100 studies used for the assessment 82 have not been made public. Before summer, EFSA proposed that access to the studies may be provided via a secure 'reading room', a set-up now being used for MEPs' access to TTIP and tax justice related documents. The Greens/EFA group is worried that this "reading room" arrangement for sensitive documents is creating a dangerous precedent that can be applied even to documents that are crucial for reviewing the independence and adequacy of EFSA's decision-making and product/chemical approval process. It is also unclear whether access to the reading room will be only for the MEPs who requested to see the studies, or for the whole European public, as the public access to documents rules would dictate.

Through the petitions they presented to the committee this week, citizens expressed powerfully their strong opposition to glyphosate. Despite the Commission decision, the petitioners request an immediate ban on all herbicides containing the substance.

With those petitions, citizens are clearly asking the European Parliament to react to the undeniable concerns about the health risks of glyphosate, both as regards it being a carcinogen and an endocrine disruptor. Facing MEPs and Commission, citizens again took the opportunity to raise their voice to remind them that they want glyphosate off the market as it affects human and animal health and is particularly harmful in combination with other substances.

The Greens/EFA Group has been campaigning against glyphosate throughout the whole re-authorisation process. During the debate, Green MEP member of the Petition committee Terricabras, showed significant support to the position of the petitioners.

Thanks to the support of most of the political groups, the petitions will stay open. They were forwarded earlier to the Environment committee and will probably be again on the agenda of the Petition committee

in the following months, depending on the opinion given by the ENVI Committee.

Glyphosate is back on the EP agenda with a clear message from citizens to stand against the use of the substance. Will the Commission continue to ignore this call or will it finally act to change the evaluation process to make it more balanced and transparent, and not only serve industry's interests?

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