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Seven Reasons To Ban Glyphosate

It's Time To Stand Up To Monsanto!

What is glyphosate, and why should you be worried about it?

Glyphosate is a chemical used in herbicides such as Monsanto's Roundup and recently became the [most used agricultural chemical of all time](#). Despite this, there's a good chance you won't have heard of it, and the chemical giants would probably be happy if it stayed that way.

Why? Well, in addition to being so extensively used, glyphosate has also proven to be highly controversial, with serious concerns being raised about its safety. The licence for its use in the EU expires at the end of June, giving the European Commission a perfect opportunity to ban it.

Unfortunately, the Commission appears to have made up its mind already, and has brought forward a proposal to extend the license until 2031. This will be the subject to the approval of a meeting of EU government officials on 7-8 March. With the Commission apparently keen to push this through in a hurry, it is vital that the arguments in opposition to its renewal are aired as soon as possible.

Here are our seven reasons why glyphosate should be banned in the EU.

One: IT could be seriously damaging your health

There is an ongoing and heated [scientific debate](#) as to whether or not glyphosate is carcinogenic. While the World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer has concluded that glyphosate is "[probably carcinogenic in humans](#)", the European Food Safety Authority ([EFSA](#)) found the opposite. Glyphosate-based herbicides are used not only in agriculture, but also in public and private gardens, potentially putting both farmers as well as consumers at risk.

[Studies](#) also show that herbicides containing the chemical act like endocrine disrupters - substances which play havoc with our hormones, and which can impact on fertility.

The EU should ban glyphosate until it is proven to be safe.

TWO: IT's a threat to animals and plants, too

It's not just human health that may suffer as a result of glyphosate. EFSA found a high long-term risk to animals, including farm animals such as cows and sheep. The [German Environment Agency](#) has also found significant adverse effects on biodiversity due to pesticides in general and glyphosate in particular. Glyphosate does not only kill target weeds, but also useful herbage in and close to fields treated with glyphosate.

Given the risks glyphosate presents to animals and biodiversity, the EU should reject its license.

THREE: GMOs and Glyphosate ARE two sides of the same coin

In many ways glyphosate and GMOs can be seen as two sides of the same coin. Of the 61 GMOs authorised in EU for import, [more than half of them](#) are glyphosate tolerant plants, designed to be used with that specific herbicide. They are both tools for the same kind of agriculture - one that is intensive, harmful to the environment and health, and bad for the local rural economy. Many cases of cancer and physical deformities have been [reported](#) in people and animals in South America, where extensive areas of land have been planted with glyphosate-tolerant GM soya in order to export animal feed to Europe.

By rejecting glyphosate, we can stand up for the health of people in the EU and beyond, the environment, show support for local economies and stop the expansion of GMOs.

Four: the expansion of harm

Glyphosate is harmful all by itself. But herbicides such as Roundup contain a cocktail of chemicals that can be [more toxic](#) than glyphosate alone, with even more risks for farmers as well as the general public.

In addition, glyphosate-resistant "super weeds" have already spread in the USA and Canada due to overuse of Roundup applied on glyphosate-resistant GM crops. To stop the proliferation of these super weeds, even more resistant genetically engineered plant variety have been approved for commercial use that are resistant to multiple herbicides, including possibly more toxic and environmentally disruptive than glyphosate.

Approving the use of glyphosate comes with a range of additional risks which can also be avoided by a ban.

FIVE: Gaps in the evidence

EFSA indicated as a 'critical concern' that eight out of 24 applicants, including Monsanto, presented specifications for glyphosate that were not supported by the toxicological assessment. In other words, the test data these applicants provided were for substances other than those they actually want to sell. In addition, EFSA's report listed 22 data gaps in the evidence.

Given the known and probable risks to human and animal health due to glyphosate, we should ensure we have all the necessary evidence before approving it for such wide use.

SIX: Lack of Transparency

Not only are there gaps in the evidence, key studies are being [hidden](#) from public scrutiny. Key conclusions of EFSA's report with regard to the carcinogenicity of glyphosate are based on those unpublished studies, which were produced by the industry themselves. It is unacceptable that these unpublished studies are being allowed to outweigh the publically available information.

Further, more than 80% of the national experts involved in the EU's assessment of glyphosate refused to have their names [disclosed](#) to the public, thereby avoiding any assessment of possible conflicts of interests.

The Commission should not be allowing glyphosate to remain in use on the basis of secret, industry funded reports assessed by people who won't publicly declare their interests.

SEVEN: There are Alternatives!

Organic farmers have demonstrated the same thing time and time again - [glyphosate is not necessary for productive farming](#). The farming of the future is working with nature not against it. It relies on high biodiversity and a high variety of crops and structures, crucially avoiding the vast monocultures that attract pests in the first place, or the continuous cropping on fields that allows the pests to build up in soil and vegetation.

The use of Glyphosate is linked to a highly intensive agriculture that is simply not sustainable. There are safer, non-chemical alternatives to glyphosate which are equally effective ways of tackling weeds (see statement by [German Environment Agency](#)).

For this reason, and for all the others set out above, glyphosate's license must be rejected.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

While the Commission seems keen to steam ahead with another 15 years of glyphosate, we still have an opportunity to block their proposal. Please contact your Minister in charge and ask her/him to block this move.

If you would like to read about about glyphosate in more detail, or to see references, please see our more comprehensive briefing, available on our website

- [Download our comprehensive briefing](#)

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