Press release | 12.11.2015

Toxic substances

Glyphosate warnings played down by EFSA; Commission must apply precautionary principle

The European Food Safety Authority today issued its re-evaluation of the controversial substance glyphosate, which is used as a herbicide, ahead of a decision by the European Commission next year on whether to reapprove glyphosate for use in the EU. The EFSA opinion, which recommends reapproval differs with the findings of the WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer, which concluded that glyphosate is probably carcinogenic to humans. Commenting on the decision, Green agriculture and public health spokesperson **Martin Häusling** said:

"There is a sad predictability about EFSA's decision to play down the risks associated with glyphosate. The finding that glyphosate is probably carcinogenic to humans by the WHO should be leading to a global moratorium on its use. However, the industry lobby has been actively sowing seeds of doubt to maintain its products on the market, at the expense of human health. The ground for today's EFSA opinion had already been laid by the German risk assessment authority.

"The European Commission must still decide on whether to reapprove glyphosate for use in the EU and we would strongly urge them to apply the precautionary principle in doing so. It would be grossly irresponsible to continue approval for a substance the WHO has found to be probably carcinogenic to humans. EFSA is essentially saying it wants more evidence of harm but this is a perverted logic. We should not be rolling the dice when there is clear evidence that there is a carcinogenic risk to humans. As long as the manufacturers fail to demonstrate an absence of harm, glyphosate should not be approved for use in the EU.

"This whole saga again raises serious questions about the flawed risk assessment procedure employed by EFSA, notably as regards its reliance on industry-supplied data, which necessarily skews its findings. There is a need to reform this to reduce the potential conflict of interest. Until this is done, the Commission not continue to approve substances for which there is evidence of risks to human health."

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Martin Häusling

Member

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