

Press briefing : PEST plenary vote

- Taking back control over the corporate influence on the decision-making process -

What's at stake:

With the case of glyphosate, it clearly emerged that industry-funded studies have been the basis of decisions taken by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to renew the authorisation to put this substance on the market. While the World Health Organisation, based on public peer-reviewed studies, found that glyphosate was probably carcinogenic to humans – an analogous classification under EU law would disqualify it from approval, EFSA, based on industry studies, did not consider that such classification was warranted.

In fact, with the current EU approval system, there is an inherent conflict of interests, given that companies selling a product are the same that are also responsible for providing the scientific studies and a first assessment to prove that their products are safe. Cherry on the cake: in the name of the protection of commercial interests, these studies are not made public in their entirety. So, there is no way we can be sure that the science behind these studies is actually accurate.

In the case of glyphosate, different initiatives have called for a reform of the current EU authorisation process.

[The European Citizens' Initiative](#) "Ban glyphosate and protect people and the environment from toxic pesticides (which got over 1 million signatures) set among its main objectives to 'ensure that the scientific evaluation of pesticides for EU regulatory approval is based only on published studies, which are commissioned by competent public authorities instead of the pesticide industry'.

[The Monsanto papers](#) have revealed that the company avoided pursuing studies on glyphosate which might come up with undesirable results for them. Monsanto also ghostwrote studies and convinced (supposedly) independent scientists to be the authors. The company also regularly attacked scientists whose research threatened their profits.

The [Greens/EFA took EFSA to court](#) for failing to give transparent and public access to the full scientific studies on which they base their glyphosate re- authorisation proposal.

At the level of the EU Parliament, thanks to our active opposition, the use of glyphosate was [only re-authorised for 5](#) instead of 15 years. That was an important first step in ending the use of this dangerous herbicide.

Furthermore, as follow-up to the glyphosate saga, Greens/EFA succeeded in having a special committee established to assess the Union's authorisation procedure for pesticides (PEST). The purpose of the committee was to look into the Union's authorisation procedure for pesticides, to analyse potential failures, and to make any recommendations necessary to achieve a high level of protection of both human and animal health and the environment. It is ultimately a question of taking back control over corporate control on the decision-making process.

The PEST report: major calls to strengthen the system

The report of the PEST committee has been voted at [committee level on 6 December 2018](#) and will now be voted in plenary on 16th January. A total of 152 amendments were tabled, including 97 - almost two-thirds by ECR, 37 GUE, 8 EFDD, 4 ENF, 3 Green + EPP, 1 Green, 2 joint am by several groups.

The PEST report ***calls for public access to all industry studies in their entirety to allow for timely independent scrutiny***, and to make sure that there are no conflicts of interest in the assessment process.

It makes **numerous calls on the European Commission and on Member States to strengthen the health and environmental assessment of pesticide active substances as well as of pesticide products.** It calls for a **ban of the use of pesticides for pre-harvest applications (“desiccation”) and in public spaces.**

It also states that the **controversy about the carcinogenicity of glyphosate is not resolved** and calls on the Science Advisory Mechanism to initiate a **systematic review of all available studies** concerning the carcinogenicity of glyphosate and glyphosate-based formulations with a view to assessing whether it would be justified to review the approval of glyphosate.

The Greens/EFA group considers this as a very progressive outcome and wish that the vote in plenary will stick to the main calls stated in the report.

Detailed key calls in the report

- full testing of active substances,
- full testing of pesticide products, including of cumulative effects,
- stronger risk management measures,
- full transparency with regard to the studies used for the assessment,
- strengthening independence, ensuring absence of conflicts of interests,
- meeting of deadlines (to end technical extensions due to delays in the assessment),
- implementation of provisions for vulnerable groups,
- reduction of animal tests,
- better statistics,
- further action against neonicotinoids.

Final PEST report to be voted in plenary
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A8-2018-0475+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN>

TILT petition: https://www.tilt.green/transparency_in_our_food_system