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11th April 2016

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

On the 13th of April, at the Strasbourg plenary, there will be a vote on the Environment Committee's objection to the Commission's draft measure to renew the EU market approval for glyphosate, the active ingredient in many widely used herbicides.

Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN UK) and 12 other UK based organisations are asking you to support this objection due to serious health and environmental concerns about glyphosate that have been raised by the scientific community.

Glyphosate-based herbicides are widely used in agriculture, forests, public areas and private gardens. The use of this substance is so extensive that it is now detected in food, drinks and in the human body (including babies and young children).

Last year, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) of the World Health Organisation (WHO) classified glyphosate as a "probable human carcinogen".

Glyphosate may also disrupt the human hormone system – the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and [leading scientists](#) have called for further investigation. Both its cancer causing and hormone disrupting properties would disqualify glyphosate from EU market approval under EU pesticides law. In addition, there are "many environmental, plant health and soil-ecosystem problems associated with heavy and repeated uses of glyphosate-based herbicides" according to the scientists.

Despite these serious concerns, the European Commission's initial proposal

- is for the maximum period possible (15 years),
- bans only one of the nearly 500 possible co-formulants, polyethoxylated (POE)-tallowamine, already no longer used in Germany, one of Europe's largest pesticides markets,
- allows a 66% increase in residues on food.
- allows glyphosate producers to prove the absence of hormone disruption *after* obtaining approval, a practice deemed inappropriate by the [EU Ombudsman for this sort of case](#).

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), which is formally responsible for the EU carcinogen classification, is about to review the possible [carcinogenicity, germ cell mutagenicity and reproductive toxicity](#) of glyphosate. That process will not be finalised before the end of 2017.

It is our strong view that the EU should not take any final decision before the potential health and environmental impacts of glyphosate have been fully established, including its potential to cause cancer and affect the endocrine system. In addition, the EU should immediately ban all uses of glyphosate that result in the greatest public and worker exposure, either directly or through residues in food.

Therefore we call on you to vote in favor of the objection to the Commission's ill-considered

proposal for glyphosate renewal and stand for the protection of human health, environment, and safer farming for all agricultural communities.

Kind regards,

Nick Mole, PAN UK and the following organisations;

Alliance for Cancer Prevention
Brighton Breast Cancer Action
Cancer Prevention and Education Society
CHEM Trust
Environmental Justice Foundation
Global Justice Now
GM Watch
Greenpeace UK
Scottish Hazards
Slow Food UK
Soil Association
War on Want

Background

In March 2015, the WHO's **International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)** classified glyphosate as a ['probable carcinogen'](#) based on 'limited evidence' in humans and 'sufficient evidence' in animals that glyphosate can cause cancer in humans. IARC has also found 'strong evidence' that glyphosate exhibits two characteristics associated with carcinogens, namely genotoxicity and the ability to induce oxidative stress.

In November 2015, the **European Food Safety Agency (EFSA)** arrived at the [opposite conclusion](#). It stated that evidence in humans is 'very limited' and that there is 'no evidence' of carcinogenicity in animals. EFSA also dismissed the evidence of genotoxicity and oxidative stress. EFSA had access to at least three [additional industry studies](#) that IARC had not seen, and that José Tarazona, head of EFSA's Pesticides Unit, described as "key" and "pivotal".

However, **94 independent scientists** – including 8 out of 17 members of the IARC Working Group – argue in a recent [editorial](#) that: "*Serious flaws in the scientific evaluation in the RAR incorrectly characterise the potential for a carcinogenic hazard from exposure to glyphosate.*"

The **EU Ombudsman** has recently [slammed](#) the European Commission's practice of accepting proof of a pesticide's safety after its formal approval. She said the practice should be applied "*restrictively*" and only "*where there is no risk that the conclusion on the safety of the active substance could be flawed*". Nonetheless, the European Commission has proposed to "submit confirmatory information as regards the absence of endocrine disrupting properties that may cause adverse effect in humans" by 1 August 2016, whereas the current EU approval runs out on 30 June 2016.

Glyphosate residues have been found in [bread](#) and [beer](#), as well as [human urine](#). EFSA has [stated](#) that existing monitoring efforts are insufficient to reliably measure glyphosate residue levels in food.

Widespread use of glyphosate has led to the emergence and spread of **glyphosate-resistant weeds**, causing farmers to spray additional herbicides. It can also “significantly increase the severity of various plant diseases, impair plant defense to pathogens and diseases, and immobilize soil and plant nutrients rendering them unavailable for plant use,” according to [Johal and Huber, 2009](#). The scientists warned that “ignoring potential non-target detrimental side effects of any chemical, especially used as heavily as glyphosate, may have **dire consequences for agriculture** such as rendering soils infertile, crops non-productive, and plants less nutritious”.