

Renewed concern over the risk assessment of glyphosate

Report by German authorities on the most commonly used herbicide criticised as inadequate

10 October 2014. In a report published today, Testbiotech is highlighting the ongoing inadequacies in the risk assessment of the herbicide, glyphosate. The weed killer is sold under brand names such as Roundup. At the beginning of this year, German authorities published a Renewal Assessment Report (RAR) as part of an EU reevaluation process for the most widely used weed killer. According to the German authorities, there were no risks to health, and it was even suggested that the acceptable daily thresholds for long term exposure (ADI) to which consumers could be exposed might be raised.

In contrast to these findings, the Testbiotech analysis shows that the German assessment report is untenable in light of new scientific evidence and cites evidence from studies published in 2013 and 2014. Testbiotech concluded that risks associated with glyphosate must be examined much more closely than has been the case so far.

"Our analysis shows, firstly, that the report from the German authorities is inconclusive," says Andreas Bauer Panskus, author of the Testbiotech report. "Recent publications show that so far the risks of glyphosate have been grossly underestimated. This is a huge problem, because residues from spraying are, for example, widely found in all sorts of food and therefore lead to continuous consumer exposure."

Several studies showed a significant effect on the hormonal system in mammals. Further, a recent study indicated for the first time that the learning behaviour of bees can be affected by glyphosate. All these risks were classified as irrelevant by the German authorities. The glyphosate assessment report submitted by the German authorities is currently being considered by the EU Member States and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and a final decision on a new authorisation is expected in 2015.

Widespread heavy use of glyphosate, has led to huge problems with weeds that have become resistant to the herbicide, especially in countries which grow genetically engineered crops. The consequences have been an increased use of glyphosate and increasing residues in food and feed produced from crops such as genetically modified soybeans. In 2013, an analysis commissioned by Testbiotech showed that transgenic soybeans from Argentina contained glyphosate residue levels five times higher than the valid limit in the EU.

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New Testbiotech report: Testbiotech comment on the German Renewal Assessment Report (RAR) on the active ingredient glyphosate, www.testbiotech.org/en/node/1094

Further Testbiotech report: High levels of residues from spraying with glyphosate found in soybeans in Argentina (2013), www.testbiotech.org/en/node/926

Announcement of German authorities:

www.bfr.bund.de/en/the_bfr_has_finalised_its_draft_report_for_the_re_evaluation_of_glyphosate-188632.html