

Glyphosate: Industry blackmailing the EU

EU Commission apparently never seriously considered prohibiting the herbicide

24 May 2017 / The EU Commission has announced that it is planning to extend authorisation for glyphosate for a further ten years. The decision is based on the latest evaluation published by the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) in March 2017, declaring glyphosate to be safe. However, it appears that banning the herbicide was never seriously considered. In fact, the EU Commission approved 14 new import authorisations for genetically engineered plants resistant to herbicides even while official discussions on the evaluation of glyphosate were still in progress. All of these plants will contain residues from spraying.

In March 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) warned for the first time that glyphosate was “probably carcinogenic”, prompting an intense EU-wide debate. However, instead of taking precautionary measures to potentially prohibit the herbicide, the EU Commission simply created other precedents: Since April 2015, the EU Commission has approved 4 import authorisations for genetically engineered soybeans, as well as 4 each for maize and cotton and 2 for oilseed rape, all of which are resistant to glyphosate. Each of these authorisations are valid for ten years. The plants are mostly used for animal feed in the EU.

If the EU stopped the extension of the authorisation for glyphosate, then the import of these genetically engineered plants would also be stopped. Currently, this is highly unlikely. It seems that the EU has left itself open to blackmail because it has failed to find alternative sources for supplies of animal feed. In effect, in 2016, industry successfully threatened the EU by announcing that supplies of animal feed would collapse if further genetically engineered plants were not allowed for import.

In the short term, there is no sufficient alternative to imports of soybeans from countries, such as Argentina, Brazil and the US, where glyphosate is applied in high dosages. Basically, a ban of glyphosate could only have been implemented if the EU had systematically and consistently promoted the cultivation of non-GM soybeans, which are already being grown in some regions of the EU.

Several of the genetically engineered plants recently approved for import are not only resistant to glyphosate, but also to combined applications of other herbicides, such as 2,4-D, dicamba, glufosinate and isoxaflutole. These herbicides are also known to leave residues that are potentially damaging to health. It is particularly problematic that the EU is not requesting feeding studies with these plants containing residues to investigate any possible risks to health before they are approved. The combination of residues in the plants can be even more toxic than glyphosate alone.

“In conclusion, no more genetically engineered plants should be authorised as long as comprehensive assessment of the health risks of the residues from spraying with glyphosate or other herbicides is not performed. At the same time, it is essential to promote alternatives to replace the current imports of animal feed. Furthermore, the EU governments should take measures to systematically reduce the spraying of glyphosate and other herbicides in order to protect biodiversity and the environment,” Christoph Then demands for Testbiotech.

Further information: [Database on the authorisation of genetically engineered plants in the EU](#) [1]
[Background on residues from spraying with glyphosate in genetically engineered plants](#) [2]
[Industry threatened the EU by announcing that supplies of animal feed would collapse](#) [3]

Source URL: <https://www.testbiotech.org/en/news/glyphosate-industry-blackmailing-eu>

Links

[Creative Commons:](#)



[1] <http://www.testbiotech.org/en/database>

[2] <https://www.testbiotech.org/node/1993>

[3] <http://www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/20160607-ASA-and-USSEC-Letter-to-Commissioner-on-3-soybean-authorizations.pdf>

