
EU Commission to keep glyphosate data secret

The EU Commission is trying to conceal major flaws in the risk assessment carried out by the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment"

5 October 2015 The EU Commission has informed Testbiotech that the public will still not be allowed to access documents on the risk assessment of the herbicide glyphosate. Testbiotech had requested access to the report prepared by the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) on the risk assessment of glyphosate, which was sent to the European Safety Authority (EFSA) several months ago. Now the Commission has told Testbiotech that it is obliged to give access "only to existing documents in the possession of the institution" and that "the requested documents do not exist at the time of writing". The final version of the report will be available only after EFSA has finished its own assessment and thereafter a "redacted version" will be published.

The BfR report is currently being used by the EFSA as the most relevant basis for evaluating the risks of the herbicide glyphosate (used in brands such as Roundup). Although the report has not been officially published it has already been heavily criticised by several experts. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) of the World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared that glyphosate is probably carcinogenic to humans. However, in its report prepared for the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) claims that there would be no risk to human health.

In August this year, the EU Commission rejected an initial request for access the BfR report made by Testbiotech, but at the same time gave the organisation an opportunity to file an application for further examination. In response, Testbiotech renewed its request, with its argument being overriding public interest. On 17 September, Testbiotech was informed by the EU Commission that it would take longer "to gather all the elements we need to carry out a full analysis of your request". But now - after the official deadline for examining the request is over - Testbiotech has subsequently been informed that the Commission is not dealing with the request for formal reasons, one of those being that a final BfR report does not as yet exist.

"Such subtleties certainly do not add to the credibility of the EU Commission. We have the strong impression that access to the report will be denied whatever the argument. There might be a simple reason: The EU Commission is trying to conceal major flaws in the risk assessment carried out by the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment", says Christoph Then for Testbiotech "If there was any ambiguity in our request, it would have been easy to sort it out as has happened in other cases. However, the EU Commission appears to have no interest in a proper communication."

Contact: Christoph Then, Tel + 49 151 54638040, info@testbiotech.org [1]

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