

Testbiotech, Frohschammerstraße 14, 80807 München

Dr. Bernhard Url, Executive Director
European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)
Parma, Italy

Open letter, sent via email

18 August 2017

Dear Dr. Url

EFSA expert – sponsored by Monsanto?

Confidential emails recently published in the US by lawyers representing consumer organisations reveal that Monsanto appears to be secretly influencing European scientists. In effect, they are attempting to eliminate concerns that the herbicide glyphosate is carcinogenic. Payments can be traced to a leading scientist at the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA): Jose Tarazona, head of the Pesticide Unit at the EFSA, who took part in a conference in the USA and was sponsored by a private stakeholder. The funding, which is likely to have originally come from Monsanto, was apparently routed via a British academic, Allister Vale. At the above mentioned conference, Tarazona declared that glyphosate is not carcinogenic.

Some background: According to the emails (attached), in March 2016, Monsanto approached the British toxicologist, Allister Vale, to persuade him to support glyphosate approval. He agreed in principle to collaborate, but did not want to receive direct payments from Monsanto. Therefore, he proposed routing the money via the funding of conferences organised by the Society of Toxicology (SOT) - to which Monsanto agreed.

As expected, in 2017, Allister Vale, organised an expert discussion on glyphosate at the annual conference of the SOT in the US. The event was chaired by Mr Vale and included Jose Tarazona as a speaker in his official role as head of the Pesticide Unit at EFSA. Mr Tarazona unequivocally took up a clear position on glyphosate i.e. that it is not carcinogenic.

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Monsanto is not named as a source of funding of the conference. However, from taking a closer look at the program it is clear that the participation of Jose Tarazona was sponsored by Allister Vale. On page 141 in the program for the SOT meeting in 2017 (www.toxicology.org/pubs/docs/Prog/2017Program.pdf), his contribution was announced as: “Is Glyphosate a Probable Human Carcinogen? No!. J. Tarazona. European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) Pesticides Unit, Parma, Italy. Sponsor: A. Vale”.

This unusual circumstance gives validity to the assumption that Monsanto is behind hidden funding that not only went to Allister Vale, but also to EFSA’s leading expert.

It is not clear if Mr. Tarazona was aware of the original source of the funding. On the other hand, private sponsoring of a leading expert at EFSA should always raise immediate concerns. Testbiotech now wants to know from EFSA exactly how and why the Jose Tarazona presentation was funded:

- Who sent the official invitation to attend the conference and who received it?
- Was Mr Tarazona offered funding as a private person?
- For what purpose exactly was the money paid? And what was the amount of money?
- Was EFSA informed about the sponsoring?
- Is private sponsorship in accordance with EFSA’s policy of independence?
- Are there any consequences EFSA is ready to take?

Please let us know your answers to the above questions. We would also appreciate any additional comments and explanations that you may have to provide sufficient clarity and transparency in this matter.

With kind regards



Dr. Christoph Then,
Executive Director Testbiotech

Attachment:

The confidential emails from Monsanto (found at <http://baumhedlundlaw.com/pdf/monsanto-documents/70-Email-Details-Monsantos-Financial-Support-of-Glyphosate-Research-Without-Disclosing-Companies-Interest.pdf>)

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