

Dr Margaret Chan
Director-General
World Health Organization
Avenue Appia 20
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

- open letter -

31 May 2016

Dear Dr Chan

Experts with strong affiliations to industry must be removed from the FAO/WHO panel

We have with great interest studied the recent assessment of the herbicide glyphosate published by the Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR). This panel, which is jointly organised by the WHO and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), came to the conclusion that glyphosate is not likely to cause cancer – a conclusion that is in contradiction to the assessment of a different WHO expert panel.

We are seriously concerned about the composition of this above-mentioned panel: The annex to this letter contains evidence to show that the chair of the panel, Alan Boobis as well the rapporteur Angelo Moretto, are well-known for their close affiliations to industry. Alan Boobis has for many years now been active in the management of the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI), which is funded by Chemical and Food Industry. According to the newspaper Guardian, in 2012, the ILSI received in all about one million US-\$ from Monsanto, which produces glyphosate, and Croplife International, which is the global umbrella organisation of the biotech and agrochemical industry. To our knowledge, the assumption of the JMPR secretary that “none of the experts involved in the JMPR lead or co-lead ILSI” is incorrect (www.who.int/foodsafety/faq/en/). Boobis acts as chair of the Board of Trustees of ILSI's global umbrella organisation. Further, he's vice-president in the Board of Directors of ILSI Europe and vice-president of ILSI Europe's Scientific Advisory Committee.

As our research shows, Alan Boobis was also involved in activities of the tobacco industry. Some years ago, both Boobis and Moretto, who is also active in ILSI, were excluded from working with the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) due to their affiliations with industry.

**TEST
BIOTECH**

Testbiotech e. V.
Institute for Independent
Impact Assessment in
Biotechnology

Frohschammerstraße 14
80807 München
Fon.: 0 89 - 35 89 92 76
Fax: 0 89 - 359 66 22
info@testbiotech.org
www.testbiotech.org

Executive Director:
Dr. Christoph Then

Tax Number:
143/222/75510

Registered Office:
Munich

Registration Nr.:
Amtsgericht München
VR 202119

The JMPR has in the past already drawn attention for being susceptible to the influence of vested interests: In 2000, a report for the WHO showed that the tobacco industry had secretly infiltrated the JMPR. At that time, industry wanted the JMPR to assess a fungicide as being not likely to be carcinogenic. Despite this incident, the standards for avoiding conflicts of interest at the JMPR were not sufficiently tightened. It is apparent that these standards are not sufficient to safeguard the JMPR's independence and credibility. All in all, Testbiotech identified at least five experts of the JMPR glyphosate working group with past or current ties with ILSI and/or the tobacco industry.

We strongly recommend raising the standards for avoiding conflicts of interest and for transparency at the JMPR and removing experts with strong affiliations to industry from this panel. Further, we kindly ask you to consider whether previous reports published by the JMPR should undergo further evaluations to make sure their content was not influenced by vested interests.

With kind regards



Dr. Christoph Then,
Executive Director Testbiotech

Annex: The Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) and the review of glyphosate: Massive conflicts of interest

**TEST
BIOTECH**

Testbiotech e. V.
Institute for Independent
Impact Assessment in
Biotechnology