EUROPEAN COMMISSION
CABINET OF COMMISSIONER TONIO BORG

The Head of Cabinet

Brussels, 22 07 2013

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your letter of 27 June 2013 with regard to the results of preliminary testing for glyphosate in human urine, to which I am replying on behalf of Commissioner Borg.

I would like to inform you that glyphosate is currently undergoing re-evaluation under Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009. In this assessment all aspects regarding risks to human and animal health and the environment are included. Besides studies and information submitted by the applicant, an extensive number of scientific publications from the open literature are included in the assessment. The Rapporteur Member State Germany will draft an assessment report (to be expected by the end of 2013/beginning of 2014) which will be peer reviewed by experts from other Member States and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The report will also be publicly available for comments on the EFSA website. Following the peer review, and possible discussions in expert meetings, EFSA will publish its conclusion of the peer review, on which the Commission will subsequently base its proposal for decision to the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health.

The re-evaluation covers i.a. the areas of human and environmental exposure to glyphosate mentioned in your letter. The Rapporteur Member State or EFSA may request additional data, if needed to reach a conclusion on the risk assessment of glyphosate.

On the coordinated control programme detailed in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 788/2012, I would like to point out that it only forms part of the control activities implemented by Member States. Besides this coordinated EU programme, Member States have national programmes in place in which glyphosate is also monitored. In 2010 for example, around 900 samples were analysed for glyphosate across the EU, of which 258 samples came from the coordinated programme. For 2011, preliminary figures indicate that the number of samples analysed increased to more than 2500. Monitoring programmes necessarily need to strike a balance between the assessment of consumer exposure and compliance with legislation, as well as among the multitude of substance/commodity combinations. To obtain an overview of monitoring results across the EU, I invite you to consult the annual EU Report on Pesticide Residues, available on the EFSA website (http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/pesticides/mrls.htm).

Any restriction, such as the banning of the use as a desiccation agent as you suggest, can only be considered if, as a result of the on-going re-evaluation of the substance, it is established that the risks related to that specific use are not acceptable.

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Following a decision on the renewal of approval of the active substance glyphosate, all authorisations for glyphosate-containing plant protection products would need to be renewed, withdrawn or amended by Member States within 12 months.

A review of the existing maximum residue levels for glyphosate is currently also on-going.

Concerning genetically modified crops, the case-by-case risk assessment of these crops includes an assessment of the possible impacts of the specific management techniques used, including the new herbicide use. Furthermore, the use of glyphosate-containing herbicides on such crops is regulated by the legislative framework on plant protection products as for any other herbicide, where Member States are competent to deliver the authorisation and specific conditions of use, if needed. The issue of interplay between the two legislations on genetically modified organisms and plant protection products will be clarified in the context of the adoption of a legally binding document on the environmental risk assessment of genetically modified organisms.

I hope that based on this information you are convinced that the risks of glyphosate are thoroughly assessed, to ensure a high level of protection of both human health and the environment.

Yours sincerely,