

College meeting

8 MARCH 2016

Glyphosate

STRASBOURG

Scene Setter

- In the pesticides area the Commission bases its decisions on opinions established according to independent scientific peer review tasked to EFSA of available data provided according to a specific protocol. This is to ensure legal certainty and proportionality in assessing the data.
- Glyphosate is the world's most widely used herbicide. It is used in the EU by several MS on almost half of their total crop area.
- Glyphosate has been authorised in the EU until 2015; the authorization is undergoing re-evaluation and rapporteur Germany did not find evidence of carcinogenic property.
- The Commission has extended the marketing of Glyphosate to June of 2016.
- In case of non-extension of authorisation prior to 30 June 2016, all plant protection products that contain glyphosate have to be taken off the market and no MRLs in food and feed – produced in the EU as well as imported – will be allowed.

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Speaking points

- Glyphosate is the world's most widely used herbicide. Every decision on glyphosate will affect EU farmers' competitiveness as well as certainty on supply from imports because glyphosate is used worldwide.
- Clearly, we are all aware of the controversy which this renewal application is generating. Public opinion in MS is now driving the respective positions of those MS. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- The recent report of the WHO cancer agency IARC that classified glyphosate as probably carcinogenic to humans should not be dismissed. But EFSA concluded that glyphosate is unlikely to pose a carcinogenic hazard to humans.
- EU MS were involved with EFSA in the re-assessment of glyphosphate and all but one agreed that neither the epidemiological data (on humans) nor the evidence from animal studies demonstrated causality between exposure to glyphosphate and the development of cancer in humans.

Background

Glyphosate is the world's most widely used herbicide. It is used in the EU by several MS on almost half of their total crop area. The substance is so widely used that it is commonly found in bread, beer and the urine of people in several countries across Europe.

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The Commission has extended the marketing of Glyphosate to **June of 2016; in case of non-extension of authorisation prior to 30 June, all plant protection products that contain glyphosate have to be taken off the market and no MRLs in food and feed – produced in the EU as well as imported – will be allowed.**

WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) **classified glyphosate as “probably carcinogenic to humans”** (spring 2015). EFSA determined that glyphosate is unlikely to be genotoxic or cancer-causing (November 2015). The difference between IARC and EFSA evaluation is due to different results of their hazard assessments (different classification models) and to different 'Weight of evidence' approaches (for IARC *one* study concluding carcinogenic is sufficient).

Glyphosate is (currently) not proposed to be classified as carcinogenic under the EU regulation for classification, labelling and packaging of chemical substances. Germany has asked the European Chemical Agency (ECHA) to produce another evaluation on the chemical, which will be available end of 2017. In case of a proposal for a classification as carcinogenic, the Commission will have to react and retract the authorization.

Public opinion is negative. The contradictory conclusions spurred 96 prominent scientists from 25 countries to write a letter in strong opposition to the EFSA report. In addition, nearly 1.5 million people petitioned Commissioner Andriukaitis for a ban on the substance. On 2 March, a conference on glyphosate was hosted by ComENVI politicians.

The standing committee of MS's experts (PAFF) was **expected to discuss and vote** this week (7 & 8 March) on whether to extend the authorisation of glyphosate for the next 15 years. However, the vote may be postponed due to reservations from several EU countries.

On 7 March, 13 MS said they were in favor of the proposal to extend the authorization ([REDACTED] [REDACTED] Three MS said they would abstain [REDACTED] [REDACTED] – although not seeing carcinogenic property - sees negative effects of the herbicide use on the biodiversity. It is understood that this view may cause an abstention in the vote.

[REDACTED]

Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide. This means, it has to be used prior to planting or emergence (**pre-plant/pre-emergence**) of the crop or on **glyphosate-resistant (GM) crops**.

In several north western European countries glyphosate can be applied **pre-harvest** for weed control, to enhance ripening of crops (desiccant properties) to reduce crop losses, and to help manage determinate crops in wet seasons. In physiologically mature grains only very few glyphosate should be translocated into the grain. Pre-harvest use accounts for a minor percentage of the total glyphosate application. Mainly winter cereals and rape seed are treated. South European climate lets crops typically ripen fully, so pre-harvest use of glyphosate is not normally recommended.

Worldwide, pre-harvest use of glyphosate concerns all cereals, rape seed, soybeans, legumes.

There is growing awareness of and criticism on pre-harvest uses of plant protection products. DG SANTE already started works for a legislative act leading to restrict these uses – not glyphosate specific and independent from the current legal act.