



Questions & Answers: Commission replies to European Citizens' Initiative on Glyphosate and announces more transparency in scientific assessments

Strasbourg, 12 December 2017

Why did the Commission not ban glyphosate?

There are currently neither scientific nor legal grounds justifying a ban of glyphosate. After a comprehensive and transparent scientific process, where more than 6.000 pages of scientific assessment were made public, the EU risk assessment concluded that glyphosate does not cause cancer nor, when used according to good agricultural practice, pose an unacceptable risk to the environment. Following this thorough scientific assessment of all available data on glyphosate and a positive vote by Member States' representatives on 27 November 2017^[1], the Commission today adopted a renewal of the approval of glyphosate for 5 years.

National authorities in Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand as well as the FAO-WHO Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) **have reached the same conclusion**. Only one agency – the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) – has a divergent view in relation to its assessment of a possible link between glyphosate and cancer in humans.

In addition, the EU assessment of impacts of glyphosate on the environment did not provide any evidence that indicates ecosystem degradation caused by glyphosate, when this is used in accordance with the conditions of authorisation and in line with good agricultural practice. However, the Commission will require that Member States pay particular attention to the risks to biodiversity when assessing applications for authorisation of products containing glyphosate as well as to the protection of amateur users.

Finally, there is a legal obligation for the European Commission to reply to applications for approval / renewal of approval, taking into account the results of the EU risk assessment.

What is now the status of glyphosate in the EU?

On 27 November 2017, EU Member States [voted in favour](#) of the Commission's proposal for a 5-year renewal of the approval, which is adopted today by the Commission. This follows President Juncker's initiative to discuss the matter several times at the College as a result of which the length of the renewal proposal was reduced from 15 to 5 years, in order to take account of the latest Resolution of the European Parliament and to get the support from as many Member States as possible. It is now up to Member States to re-assess all the glyphosate-based products available in their territories.

Why 5 years and not 15 years?

While 15 years is the period that the Commission usually proposes for the renewal of approval of an active substance when all approval criteria are met, glyphosate is no routine case.

In addition to the outcome of the scientific assessments of glyphosate carried out at EU level by the European Food Safety Authority ([EFSA](#)), the European Chemicals Agency ([ECHA](#)) and the Member States, other legitimate factors were taken into account when setting the appropriate period for renewal. While a large amount of information on the active substance glyphosate already exists, additional information on glyphosate is being published at an exceptionally high rate compared to other active substances.

Therefore, the Commission has taken into account possibilities of rapid future developments in science and technology when deciding on the length of the approval period of glyphosate, also bearing in mind the fact that glyphosate is the most widely used herbicide in the EU.

Moreover, the Commission has taken into account the latest non-binding Resolutions adopted by the European Parliament. The decision formally adopted today, also carefully considered the 4th [European Citizens' Initiative](#) (ECI).

What happens with glyphosate-based products, like Roundup? Are they automatically re-authorised as well?

No. This is up to Member States. Member States are responsible for the authorisation and use on their

territories of plant protection products ('pesticides') containing active substances.

Only the approval of active substances is decided at EU level. This division of responsibility is based on the principle of subsidiarity and reflects the differences in climatic, agronomic and environmental conditions in Member States.

Following a renewal of glyphosate, Member States must re-evaluate all existing authorised products containing this active substance – such as Roundup. If the authorisation holders request from national authorities to maintain the earlier authorisations, Member States may also decide to introduce restrictions or bans for some or all of them, where this is warranted on the basis of evidence related to the particular circumstances in their territories.

See how pesticides are approved in the EU:

<http://ec.europa.eu/assets/sante/food/plants/pesticides/lop/index.html>

What will the Commission do to increase public access to the scientific studies submitted by the industry?

The Commission fully agrees that transparency in scientific assessments and decision-making is vital to ensuring trust in the food safety regulatory system. Therefore, the Commission will present a **legislative proposal by spring 2018**, which will further increase transparency and the quality of studies used in the scientific assessment of substances. The proposal will cover these and other relevant aspects such as the governance of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

In particular, it will examine possibilities to increase the transparency of the studies commissioned by industry and strengthen the governance for the conduct of such studies. A public consultation will be carried out prior to it.

A significant part of the studies and other information submitted by the industry for the evaluation of active substances is already made publicly available. This includes the summary dossier, the Assessment Report of the Rapporteur Member State on which EFSA carries out a public consultation, all comments from Member States' experts and the public and the responses thereto, reports of peer review expert meetings, and the EFSA Conclusion. Over 6,000 pages of scientific assessment were made public already in the case of glyphosate.

What about the possibility for public funding of scientific studies on products like glyphosate?

Individual studies cost between several thousands to several million euro. The Commission remains committed to the principle that public money should not be used to commission studies which would help the industry to put a product on the market. Nevertheless, the Commission will, in the coming months, examine whether innovative responses, like the financing of ad-hoc studies by European agencies in case of serious doubts on widely used substances could be envisaged. In such cases, an involvement of public national authorities and enhanced auditing of studies could also be envisaged.

Is the current use of pesticides in the EU sustainable?

EU policy is already directed towards reducing dependency on pesticides and achieving a pesticide-free future as requested in the European Citizens' Initiative "Ban glyphosate and protect people and the environment from toxic pesticides". Organisers of the ECI called for "EU-wide mandatory reduction targets for pesticide use, with a view to achieving a pesticide-free future".

Member States are competent and responsible for the (sustainable) use of pesticides in their territory. At the same time, the implementation of the Sustainable Use Directive^[2] remains patchy. As shown by a [Report](#) published in October 2017, while all Member States have adopted National Action Plans on pesticides – in many cases with significant delays and with a huge diversity in their completeness and coverage – **only five Member States^[3] set high-level measurable targets**, of which four relate to risk reduction and one to use reduction.

The Commission continues to call for additional efforts by Member States including the certification and training of professional users, distributors and advisors, restrictions on the sale of pesticides for professional use to persons holding a certificate, strict conditions for handling and storage of pesticides, the inspection of spraying equipment, a general prohibition on aerial spraying, reduction in pesticide use in specific areas such as public parks, the protection of the aquatic environment and the provision of information to the general public.

The recently adopted Commission [Communication on the Future of Food and Farming^{\[4\]}](#) recognises the need to support the objectives of the Sustainable Use Directive.

What is the role of Integrated Pest Management (IPM)?

The [Sustainable Use Directive](#) requires Member States to promote low pesticide-input pest

management, giving wherever possible, priority to non-chemical methods. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a cornerstone of the Directive, but compliance with the principles of IPM at individual grower level is not being systematically checked by Member States. While Member States take a range of measures to promote the use of IPM, this does not necessarily ensure that the relevant techniques are actually implemented by users. The [Report](#) concludes that IPM remains underused by Member States.

Furthermore, Member States have not yet set clear criteria in order to ensure that the general principles of Integrated Pest Management are implemented by all professional users. Such criteria are needed to verify that the intended outcome of IPM, a reduction in the dependency on pesticides, is achieved. If this is not the case, Member States need to take enforcement action.

How will the Commission help Member States reduce the impact of pesticides?

The Commission will support Member States in the development of methodologies to assess compliance with the Integrated Pest Management principles, taking into account the diversity of EU agriculture and the principle of subsidiarity. Low pesticide-input pest management includes organic farming, which now covers 6.2 % of the EU Agricultural Area.

The Commission is also doing its utmost to increase the availability of low risk substances. As a concrete result, the number of EU approved low risk and/or non-chemical pesticide substances have doubled since 2009. In order to further increase the availability of low-risk substances, the Commission prioritised the assessment of potential low-risk active substances in the ongoing review programme. With the adoption of a recent [legislation](#), the Commission clarified existing criteria for the identification and approval of low-risk substances.

Finally, the Commission will also continue to work with Member States in disseminating examples of good practice in implementation through Working Groups and training. Under the Better Training for Safer Food programme, priority is given to strengthening Member States' capacity for understanding and implementing sustainable use principles.

Following the adoption of revised [National Action Plans](#), and with the updated information available to it through its audits and other sources, the Commission will produce a further report, in 2018, on the use of pesticides.

How will progress towards implementation of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive be measured?

In order to monitor trends in risk reduction from pesticide use at EU level, the Commission will establish **harmonised risk indicators** in addition to existing national risk indicators. These would enable the Commission to determine the effectiveness of measures when assessing future policy options.

For more information:

The European Citizens' Initiative: "[Ban glyphosate and protect people and the environment from toxic pesticides](#)"

Press release: [Glyphosate: Commission responds to European Citizens' Initiative and announces more transparency in scientific assessments](#)

[1] Appeal Committee on 27 November 2017, a positive opinion was reached with Member States, 18 of them (65.71% of the EU's population) voting in favour of the renewal, 9 (32.26%) against and 1 (2.02%) abstaining.

[2] https://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/pesticides/sustainable_use_pesticides_en

[3] Four Member States have risk reduction targets (Belgium, Denmark, Greece and Germany) and one (France) have a use reduction target.

[4] COM (207) 713

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