

Implementation of pesticides legislation

Against the backdrop of ongoing controversy regarding the approval of glyphosate, the European Parliament is expected to vote on a report on the implementation of EU legislation on plant protection products in September.

Background

The 2009 regulation on plant protection products, often referred to as '[pesticides](#)', is designed to ensure a high level of protection for human health and the environment, and to enhance the functioning of the internal market while improving agricultural production.

Plant protection products are subject to a dual approval process. First, active substances are approved at EU level provided they meet a number of criteria, mainly based on hazard. The Commission approves an active substance for one or more specific uses after a risk assessment by national regulatory agencies and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), a risk management exercise by the Commission, and endorsement by a standing committee of Member State representatives. Approval may be subject to conditions and is typically granted for 10 years. A number of derogations are applicable in specific cases. Second, commercial plant protection products containing one or more approved active substances are authorised at Member State level if they satisfy certain conditions, including that it is sufficiently effective in realistic conditions of use; it does not have any (direct or indirect) harmful effects on humans or animals; and it does not have any unacceptable impact on the environment. To facilitate the authorisation process, the EU has been divided into three administrative zones: North, Centre and South.

Recent developments

A controversy emerged in 2015 over the renewal of the approval of [glyphosate](#), an active substance widely used in broad-spectrum herbicides. The controversy was triggered by diverging assessments of its carcinogenicity: the International Agency for Research on Cancer, a branch of the World Health Organization, classified glyphosate as probably carcinogenic to humans, while the European Food Safety Authority and the European Chemicals Agency found it unlikely to pose a carcinogenic hazard to humans. The European Commission renewed the approval of glyphosate for five years in December 2017. In February 2018, the European Parliament set up a special committee on the European Union's authorisation procedure for pesticides ([PEST](#)), which is expected to conclude its work by December 2018.

European Parliament position

On 10 July 2018, the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) adopted a [report](#) on the implementation of the plant protection products regulation, based among other things on a [study](#) carried out by the European Parliamentary Research Service. The report expresses concerns that the regulation has not been implemented effectively and that emergency authorisations have been misused. It calls for the creation of an innovation-friendly regulatory framework; for the promotion of agricultural practices based on integrated pest management; and for the maintenance and strengthening of an evaluation system that is scientifically robust, objective, and based on peer-reviewed evidence. The report urges the Commission and the Member States to ensure full and uniform application of the hazard criteria; to increase the overall transparency of procedures; to incentivise research initiatives on active substances, including biological low-risk substances; and to duly apply the precautionary principle when acting as risk managers. It also calls on the Commission to submit a specific legislative proposal establishing a fast-track evaluation, authorisation and registration process for low-risk pesticides.

Own-initiative report: [2017/2128\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: ENVI; Rapporteur: Pavel Poc (S&D, Czech Republic).

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Author: Didier Bourguignon, Members' Research Service
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eprs@ep.europa.eu (contact) <http://www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu> (intranet) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank> (internet) <http://epthinktank.eu> (blog)