
Glyphosate renewal: Parliament puts people's health first

MEPs insist that glyphosate, a potentially carcinogenic substance, be banned after 2022. Member states decided on 27 November that the herbicide can be used in the EU for another five years.

Glyphosate is the world's most widely and heavily applied weed-killer, however there are long-standing [concerns](#) about how it might affect people's health. This is why in October 2017 MEPs demanded a full ban glyphosate-based herbicides by December 2022 and immediate restrictions on the use of the substance.

In 2016 the European Commission originally proposed to reauthorise the use of [glyphosate](#) for the next 15 years. Due to the reluctance of some countries, it was forced to reduce this period first to ten years and then to five in order to find the required majority of member states to support the herbicide's renewal.

However, this still does not go far enough for MEPs. Maltese S&D member Miriam Dalli said: "We asked for a [phase-out until the year 2022](#) and an immediate ban for non-professional use."

Czech S&D member Pavel Poc, one of the MEPs responsible for drafting the resolution calling for a ban, said: "I would like the Commission to look at the adverse effects of the compound which were not assessed until now."

European campaign to ban glyphosates

MEPs' concerns about glyphosates' potential health impact are shared by many people all over Europe. A [European citizens' initiative](#) collected 1.3 million signatures to ask for a [ban](#)

[glyphosate](#) and protect people and the environment from toxic pesticides.

Parliament organised a hearing with them on 20 November to find out more about the initiative. Franziska Achterberg, representing the organisers of the initiative, told MEPs, “Glyphosate causes disastrous environmental impacts, it is designed to kill plants indiscriminately. It is the ultimate killer machine in the words of its producers.”

In March 2015, the [International Agency for Research on Cancer \(IARC\)](#) classified glyphosate as probably carcinogenic to humans, an assessment not shared by the [European Food Safety Authority \(EFSA\)](#) and the [European Chemicals Agency \(ECHA\)](#).

A number of MEPs asked the organisers of the citizens' initiative why they did not have faith in the assessments by the EU agencies. Achterberg replied that their risk assessment relied heavily on industry-sponsored reviews.

How safe is glyphosate produced by Monsanto?

After Monsanto was accused of ghost-writing research on the safety of its flagship herbicide, representatives from the company were invited to the Parliament to explain themselves in a [hearing](#) organised by environmental and agricultural committees on 11 October.

Documents clearly show a history of deception by Monsanto, said Carey Gillam, an investigative journalist from [US Right to Know](#), a non-governmental organisation focusing on food system issues. Trying to influence policymakers, the firm has also set up networks of US and EU scientist to push for glyphosate while appearing independent, she warned.

The company’s representatives declined to appear before MEPs, saying that the hearing was not "an appropriate forum" to address the issue. The Parliament President and the political group leaders then [banned Monsanto lobbyists](#) from Parliament.

Monsanto had been forced to disclose papers, internal emails and documents in US courts investigating links between glyphosate and blood cancer. In June 2017 [MEPs said](#) these had shed doubt on the credibility of a number of studies sponsored by the company.

The studies were part of the evidence used by the [European Food Safety Authority \(EFSA\)](#) and the [European Chemicals Agency \(ECHA\)](#) to evaluate the safety of glyphosate.

In 2016 German pharmaceuticals and pesticides company Bayer offered to buy US-based Monsanto for \$66 billion. The deal is now [under scrutiny by the Commission's competition lawyers](#). The merger would create the world's largest pesticides and seeds group in what is already a very concentrated industry.



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