Question for written answer E-7874/2010
to the Commission
Rule 117
Michail Tremopoulos (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Safety standards regarding widely used pesticide

Research findings[1] show that glyphosate, the active substance contained in Roundup, the most widely sold weed killer in the world, causes malformations affecting laboratory frog and chicken embryos when administered in concentrations much lower than those used in agricultural sprinklers and well below the EU upper limit for residues. The research was prompted by medical reports concerning high rates of deformity at birth in farming areas of Argentina, where vast areas are devoted to the monoculture of Monsanto 'Roundup Ready' (RR) genetically modified soya, which is regularly sprayed from the air.

The figures speak for themselves: the EU maximum admissible glyphosate residue level in soya seed is 20 mg/kg. Significantly, this ceiling was increased by a factor of 200 (from 0.1 mg/kg to 20 mg/kg in 1997) when the marketing of genetically modified RR soya commenced in Europe. According to the above research findings, embryo deformations were caused by exposure to glyphosate concentrations of 2.03 mg/kg. The soya in question, however, may contain glyphosate residue concentrations of as much as 17 mg/kg. Roundup is widely used in conjunction with genetically modified soya.

In view of this:

1. Is the Commission aware of the above research findings?

2. To what extent did it take account of them in determining its policy regarding genetically modified organisms, particularly with regard to matters such as coexistence and the authorisation of new varieties[2]?

3. What action does the Commission intend to take regarding the pending application from Monsanto for the cultivation of NK603 glyphosate-resistant maize, concerning which the EFSA has already given its approval?

[1] http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/tx1001749.
[2] OJ C 200, 22.7.2010, p. 1.