



**Pesticide
Action
Network**
Europe

Phil Hogan
Member of the European Commission
Responsible for Agriculture and Rural Development
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium

Brussels, 26th September 2017

Open letter reg. Glyphosate re-authorisation and the EU model of farming

Dear Commissioner,

We have recently read in the news¹ that you support a ten years re-authorisation of glyphosate, inter alia arguing that *'It is too important for agriculture - and for urban dwellers as well who haven't access to alternative problems in relation to weeds in their gardens either'*

We wish to bring your attention to the EU Directive on Sustainable Use of Pesticides ([Directive 2009/128/EC](#)) approved by Member States in 2009: this Directive has resulted in that governments in France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Netherlands have made clear time-tables towards zero use of pesticides in public areas. Beyond these Member States a number of towns in Spain, Austria and Switzerland, have specifically discontinued glyphosate use in public areas². And not only, France and half of Belgium have also decided to ban pesticide for use in private gardens, and the French Senate approved in May this year a proposal for a EU resolution calling to end use of non-agricultural pesticides across Europe³. In other words, examples of alternatives to glyphosate and other pesticide uses are thriving across the EU. It is highly unfortunate that a Commissioner pronounces an opinion on the subject without being aware of those realities and of EU law.

Also, alternatives to glyphosate are already available within agriculture too: The rural development programmes of Belgium (Flanders), France and Luxembourg are offering farmers financial compensation for the uptake of mechanical weeding, for instance the Flemish rural development plan⁴ says: *In Flemish agriculture and horticulture, most crops are kept free from weeds with the help of pesticides. However, it is possible to keep certain crops weed-free via mechanical weed control. The elimination of pesticides has an immediate positive effect on the quality of the soil, on the ground and surface water and on the*

¹ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/commission-open-to-biodiversity-clause-to-end-glyphosate-deadlock/>

² <http://www.pesticide-free-towns.info/contact-links>

³ <http://www.pan-europe.info/press-releases/2017/05/international-press-conference-calling-eu-wide-non-agricultural-pesticide-ban>

⁴ http://lv.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/attachments/gr_201501_brochure_en_rdp_vrn_21x21_digi.pdf

biodiversity of the plot and of its surroundings. Mechanical weed control is eligible for support if it is applied on a plot of at least 0,5 hectare.

Mechanical weeding is one of the alternatives to glyphosate in agriculture but there are many others starting with crop rotation. However, taken into account that glyphosate currently is considered by many a “miracle product”, we do recognise that it will take time before alternative methods become mainstream and horticultural and agronomic techniques encouraging nature based solutions have been fully implemented, but it is time to get seriously started.

As the EU Commissioner for agriculture, we expect you to provide a vision for our agriculture, and to help EU farmers work with nature not against it, to become more autonomous and not to be dependent on chemical inputs. Luckily, progressive farmers have not waited and have developed and applied alternative techniques that – yes Mr Hogan – are efficient and cost-effective⁵.

We call on you – rather than blindly call for reauthorisation – to as part of the CAP reform include proposals ‘towards low impact farming’ boosting functional biodiversity building on their agro-ecosystems to carry out the natural processes that guarantee fertility and productivity in the long term without resorting to soaking the landscape in chemicals that kill⁶. We believe this can be done starting by including and enforcing the Sustainable Use Directive -SUDP (and the Water Framework Directive) into cross compliance, but also building on the greening of the CAP and the fact that EFAs are now pesticide free, that FAS since 2015 needs to inform farmers about uptake of alternatives techniques, while further uptake of low impact farming should be encouraged through agri-environmental measures, EIPs etc. We believe that pesticide dependency reductions must be one of the success indicators for the CAP of tomorrow.

As you work in Brussels we encourage you to use next weekend walking around to discover how the 19 communes in Brussels have made serious progress towards zero pesticides use in our parks, playgrounds, cemeteries, sidewalks, sport fields, and other public areas, and how urban dwellers and farmers are on the move towards stop using glyphosate and neonicotinoids!

Finally, as you often go to Strasbourg, we invite you to visit an innovative and smart project Fredon Alsace, which is a group of farmers who are assisting towns in the move towards going pesticide free⁷.

Best regards,
Francois Veillerette
PAN Europe

⁵ Kehlenbeck et al, 2015: *Impact assessment of partial or complete abandonment of glyphosate application for farmers in Germany*, Julius-Kuhn-Archiv, 451, 2015. ISBN 978-3-95547-027-2. EN executive summary (p.17)

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/sep/21/assumed-safety-of-widespread-pesticide-use-is-false-says-top-government-scientist>

⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=12&v=q2ctZamol_k