

# Chemicals lobby makes case for glyphosate licence renewal

Robert Hodgson 12 Jun 2020 [ENDSEurope](#)

An alliance of chemical firms has submitted 100 new scientific studies to support its application for renewed EU authorisation to market the systemic herbicide glyphosate, which is due to expire in 2022.

The near-ubiquitous agro-chemical has been linked to a range of diseases and is central to a monoculture model of extensive arable farming. It was re-authorised for five years in 2017 amid controversy that sparked a European Parliament inquiry.

The Glyphosate Renewal Group (GRG) submitted an application for renewal three days before the official deadline of 15 December last year, which is in turn three years before the existing five-year license expires. On Monday, it submitted its dossier of supporting evidence.

The aim is to “provide the scientific facts needed to prove that glyphosate does not pose a risk to human health or the environment,” the industry group said. “To enable this risk assessment by competent authorities, the submitted dossier contains approximately 1,000 scientific studies, out of which 100 are new.”

The evidence will be assessed by an Assessment Group on Glyphosate (AGG), appointed by the European Commission and comprising regulators from France, Hungary, the Netherlands and Sweden.

The industry group said it would “soon make available” the dossier, which it said also contains “supplementary data and evidence of the positive impact glyphosate can have on biodiversity” and a “comprehensive literature review”.

Hans Muilerman of Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Europe is concerned that the EU authorisation system is skewed in favour of industry. “The root of the problem is and remains that industry is testing its own products, a historical mistake in EU law,” he said.

“Only industry studies are considered, the ones with the conflict of interest,” Muilerman told ENDS, citing a PAN Europe report from 2018. “And this will lead to the conclusion that glyphosate is safe, as [the European Food Safety Authority] EFSA did.”

Eric Andrieu, the social democrat MEP who chaired the parliamentary committee of inquiry, said it is often overlooked that substances such as glyphosate pose risks to agricultural workers who are exposed to it all year round, as well as consumers of farm produce.

“I find that the precautionary principle is being flouted with increasing regularity,” Andrieu told ENDS. “Workers and consumers are like laboratory rats on whom we test substances without knowing beyond the least doubt their long term effects. This is unacceptable.”

German chemical giant Bayer, a member of the GRG, bought out in 2018 the embattled US firm Monsanto, which developed glyphosate in the 1970s. In an emailed statement to ENDS, the firm “strongly disagreed” with the suggestion that chemicals firms could cherry pick scientific papers.

“Europe has one of the most stringent systems in the world when it comes to the approval of pesticides,” Bayer said, noting that the GRG website also has a transparency section with links to minutes of meetings with regulatory agencies and the application for renewal.

With the European Commission having recently proposed cutting pesticides use by 50% and making a quarter of all EU farmland organic by 2030, the next political battle over re-licensing glyphosate could be as much about environmental impact as risk to human health.

Bayer said it supports the objective of reducing the environmental impacts of pesticide use outlined in the biodiversity and farm-to-fork strategies, but said a “holistic approach” would be needed. “Focusing solely on an active substance such as glyphosate is not helpful,” the firm said. “We need measurable and realistic reduction targets.”

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Follow-up: GRG website; PAN Europe report; European Commission information on glyphosate