



**Pesticide  
Action  
Network**  
Europe

# Press >>>>>>> Release <<<<<<<<

Brussels 03 December 2019

## **Austria takes the lead to ban glyphosate, bringing human health and the environment to the forefront**

Wild Earlier this year, the Austrian parliament had decided to vote a ban on glyphosate, Bayer/Monsanto's flagship herbicide. Austrian lawmakers decided to link the ban to the absence of a negative opinion from the European Commission. A negative opinion from the European Commission could potentially lead to the launch of an infringement procedure. However, the Commission did not provide any opinion to Austria, resulting in a green light for a ban on glyphosate!

In the 90's, France banned neonicotinoids for specific crops linked to the death of thousands of honeybee colonies; at the time, the Commission sent negative opinions but never launched an infringement procedure - and banned neonicotinoids 20 years later!

The 3-month period allowing the European Commission to react has now expired, meaning the Austrian parliament will now be able to proceed to implementing a ban on glyphosate-based herbicides as from 1 January 2020.

Angeliki Lyssimachou, environmental toxicologist at PAN Europe said: *"It is the first time a Member State bans glyphosate. Studies have shown that the toxicity of glyphosate-based products is thousands of times higher due to the adjuvants that producing companies add to make it more 'efficient'. That the toxicity of the mixture is not properly tested was recently confirmed in a judgment from the European Court of Justice: Roundup should have been tested for its carcinogenicity properties as a whole, and not by only taking into account the active ingredient, glyphosate"*.

Following a prejudicial question sent by the tribunal of Foix (France), the European Court of Justice recently confirmed<sup>1</sup> that pesticide formulations (active ingredient + co-formulants/adjuvants) need to be assessed for their carcinogenicity properties, not just the active substance. The difference in risk assessment was one of the reasons that led to different conclusions on the carcinogenicity of glyphosate between the International Agency for Cancer research (IARC) and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in 2015.

Martin Dermine, policy officer at PAN Europe, said: *"Member States like to shirk responsibility by hiding behind the European Commission when it comes to ensuring a higher level of protection for human health or the environment than the current one in the EU, often saying it is not within their power. Actually, the pesticide regulation allows them to enforce more stringent measures, as they are responsible for the harm caused by the formulation, not the active ingredient only<sup>2</sup>. For instance, Sweden decided to ban toxic soil fumigants in the 80's to protect soil biodiversity and peoples' health, while Belgium keeps authorising them. This new Austrian example is a reminder that Member States are allowed to choose another path for their agriculture, as well as for the protection of human health and the environment"*.

Lyssimachou added: *"Like for other pesticides, alternatives to glyphosate exist. They are not significantly more expensive in the long run but they require more knowledge. I hope that the Austrian government will have the wisdom to accompany and support its farmers in the transition"*.

Germany has already announced it would ban glyphosate in 2023, while France planned a full ban in 2021, however French president Emmanuel Macron said earlier this year the ban would not be total.



**Contact** Angeliki Lysimachou, +32 473 37 56 71, [angeliki@pan-europe.info](mailto:angeliki@pan-europe.info)

<sup>1</sup> <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2019-10/cp190126fr.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Article 44 of pesticide regulation 1107/2009/EC.

**Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Europe** is a network of NGOs working to reduce the use of hazardous pesticides and have them replaced with ecologically sound alternatives. We work to eliminate dependency on chemical pesticides and to support safe sustainable pest control methods. Our network brings together 40 consumer, public health, and environmental organisations, and women's groups from across Europe.