

No obstacles to ban glyphosate New report shows that alternatives exist for all uses

This year the EU will decide on the re-approval of glyphosate¹, the active ingredient of the most popular and controversial weed killer around the world. Exposure to the herbicide not only poses a risk to human health and a variety of living organisms but it also threatens biodiversity and the future of agriculture. European Citizens have already demanded its ban².

PAN Europe's [new report](#) in collaboration with the European Greens shows that much safer non-chemical alternatives exist for all known major uses of glyphosate-based herbicides (GBH) and how the transition to a glyphosate-free agriculture is economically feasible.

There is a widespread misbelief that herbicides are safe for human health and have little impact on the environment. Based on this misbelief, mainstream agricultural systems are now almost completely dependent on the use of herbicides, including glyphosate. In 2017, glyphosate represented 33% of the total herbicide market in the EU³.

While the agroindustry sector claims there are no viable alternatives, the new edition of the PAN Europe report shows that ending glyphosate is not only necessary but entirely possible. Following an extended review of the negative impacts of glyphosate on living organisms and ecosystems in general, the report presents the available alternative methods for weed management for all major uses of glyphosate as well as data on the economics of phasing out glyphosate.

Gergely Simon, chemical officer at PAN Europe said: *“Science is clear; glyphosate damages the ecosystems including pollinators and beneficial insects, earthworms, soil biota, and causes direct harm to agriculture. Our report on available alternatives to glyphosate delivers a clear message, in fact, there are zero obstacles in banning this harmful chemical substance.”*

Weed management, however, is one of the major challenges in agriculture, particularly in arable and vegetable cropping systems but there are other solutions to glyphosate. Dr Charles Merfield, a world-leading expert in non-chemical weed management and main author of the report says *“Managing weeds without the agrichemical herbicides is entirely feasible. Organic farmers and growers have been doing this for over 70 years! Scientists and machinery companies have built up a huge amount of experience, expertise, science, and have developed techniques and many machines for non-chemical weed management.”*

As the report shows there are both low and high-tech safer alternatives to glyphosate in weed management. In this way, farmers may maintain their yields, avoid weeds building resistance, protect soil health and biodiversity, and minimise erosion. In parallel, they protect their own health and that of their families and neighbours, as well as the environment. The annexe reads as a ‘cookbook’ for working without glyphosate.

¹ Member State representatives must decide on a renewal of glyphosate's EU approval before the end of 2023 when glyphosate's approval in the EU expires.

² Citizens demand the protection of health and the environment. Europeans have already demanded the end of glyphosate and harmful pesticides. In 2017, a [successful European Citizens Initiative \(ECI\)](#) asked the European Commission and Member States to ban glyphosate. The recent [successful European Citizens Initiative Save Bees and Farmers](#) is asking for the phasing out of 80% of the use of synthetic pesticides by 2030 and 100% by 2035. The European Biodiversity and the Farm to Fork Strategy oblige Europe to cut the use of chemical pesticides in half by 2030. These objectives cannot be achieved without the phasing out of the most widely used pesticide in Europe.

³ Glyphosate counts for 33% of the EU herbicide market. The global use of glyphosate has increased almost 15 times in the last 10 years. Glyphosate is the leading herbicide-active substance and the global market leader. Europe held around 16.6% of the global glyphosate market in 2012, and in 2017, glyphosate represented 33% of the total herbicide market in the EU.

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 over 45 consumer, public health and environmental organisations and women's groups from across Europe.





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Press Release

The new edition arrives timely as EU policymakers are negotiating to cut down pesticide use and risk in half. *“Our policy-makers must stand by their commitment to reducing pesticide dependency. Without eliminating glyphosate Europe cannot fulfil EU’s 50% pesticide reduction targets by 2030 set by the European Green Deal and in the Farm to Fork strategy,”* added Gergely Simon.

Such a transition requires commitments by policymakers but also by farmers, and should be seen as an opportunity. *“Shifting to non-chemical weed management requires changes to the wider farm system, principally diversification, such as a wider range of crops and livestock, in a rotation. This will have multiple benefits for the farm and shared environment, e.g., soil health, biodiversity, fewer novel entities (such as agrichemicals) in the environment, cleaner water and air, and so on. Moving from herbicide-dominated weed management to integrated weed management focused on non-chemical techniques is not therefore a risk, rather it is a huge opportunity to improve all aspects of farm systems including profitability,”* Dr Merfield added.

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