

EU reopens discussions on glyphosate approval

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News

The EU's standing committee on plants, animals, food and feed has met to discuss the European Commission's proposal to renew the licence for the use of glyphosate in the EU for 10 years.



Corn crops | *Photo credit: Press Association*

Items on their agenda included discussions on neonicotinoids ban and glyphosate re-approval.

On glyphosate, the Commission proposes a 10 year renewal, maintaining the ban of the coformulant POE-Tallowamine.

Their proposals would also oblige member states to minimise use of pesticides with glyphosate in areas used by the general public or by vulnerable groups (pregnant and nursing women, the unborn, infants and children, the elderly and workers and residents subject to high pesticide exposure over the long term) such as public parks and gardens, sports and recreation grounds, school grounds and children's playgrounds and in the close vicinity of healthcare facilities.

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The Commission has not prescribed further restrictions at EU level, but passes the responsibility onto member states to pay particular attention to a number of things when evaluating or authorising pesticides at product level, including the protection of the groundwater in vulnerable areas, in particular with respect to non-crop uses.

In addition, the Commission has not ruled out use by hobby gardeners. It has proposed the minimisation of use close to public parks, playground and gardens, but not a ban, and will not insist on strict limitation of pre-harvest applications.

This is a first discussion, without a vote, and the decision on reapproving glyphosate has to be taken before 15 December, when the current approval expires.

Parliament's Greens/EFA group food safety spokesperson Bart Staes commented, "The European Commission's proposal to renew the license of glyphosate is critically flawed."

The Belgian MEP added, "Their proposal falls well short of the conditions and demands backed by a big majority of the European Parliament last year. Since then, further concerns have come to light as a result of the Monsanto papers.

"The papers showed clear signs of intensive lobbying from glyphosate industry representatives. We have to be sure that their influence has not been disproportionate, especially given the many serious health concerns associated with the substance. With so many unanswered questions, the standing committee must vote against the renewal."

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, citizens toppled a giant glyphosate bottle at the Schuman roundabout outside the European Commission to symbolise the demand of over 1.3 million people across Europe calling for a ban of the controversial weedkiller.

The debate over its future prompted the fastest growing European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) in history; it demands an end to its use, an overall reduction in pesticide use, and more transparency in their safety assessments.

David Schwartz, ECI Coordinator at WeMove.EU, said, "There is more than enough scientific evidence of glyphosate's health and environmental harm to justify a ban. Over one million Europeans are asking for a glyphosate ban and a transition to a pesticide-free future."

He added, "Every day, organic farmers are showing that it is possible to be productive and profitable without pesticides. It is high time our governments listen to their citizens, dismiss industry-peddled information and reject the Commission's proposal to keep glyphosate on the market for another 10 years."

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter for the Parliament Magazine

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