
Rt Hon. Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
DEFRA
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

13 May 2016

Dear Secretary of State,

Re: Standing Committee vote on EU Commission's draft measure to renew EU market approval for glyphosate (Wednesday 18th May 2016)

I write on behalf of Breast Cancer UK, to ask that UK representatives on the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed vote against the European Commission's draft proposal to renew EU market approval for glyphosate because of concerns that it is damaging to human health.

Glyphosate-based herbicides are widely used in UK agriculture, forests and public spaces including parks, schools and road sides as well as in private gardens. The use of this substance is so extensive that it is now detected in food, drinks and in the human body including babies and young children.

In March 2015, experts from 11 countries met at the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) to independently assess the carcinogenicity of glyphosate and concluded that glyphosate *is* a "probable human carcinogen" (2A group)¹. Although in November 2015, The European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) rejected this conclusion, over 90 leading scientists from around the world² criticised EFSA's "flawed" report and have called on the European Commission to disregard its findings.

Breast Cancer UK is especially concerned about glyphosate's possible role in increasing breast cancer risk. Glyphosate acts as an oestrogen mimic³ and has the ability to inhibit aromatase (an enzyme involved in oestrogen biosynthesis), and therefore has the potential to adversely affect breast development.

In accordance with the Regulation (EC) No, 1107/2009, glyphosate's cancer causing and hormone disrupting properties should disqualify it from EU market approval under EU pesticides law. In addition to human health concerns, there are many environmental problems associated with heavy and repeated uses of glyphosate-based herbicides.

¹ Guyton, K. Z. et al. (2015). Carcinogenicity of tetrachlorvinphos, parathion, malathion, diazinon, and glyphosate. *Lancet Oncology* 16(5): 490-1. [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanonc/article/PIIS1470-2045\(15\)70134-8/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanonc/article/PIIS1470-2045(15)70134-8/abstract)

² Portier, C. J. et al. (2015). Open letter: Review of the Carcinogenicity of Glyphosate by EFSA and BfR. November 27 2015 <http://www.zeit.de/wissen/umwelt/2015-11/glyphosat-offener-brief.pdf>

³ Thongprakaisang S, et al. (2013) [Glyphosate induces human breast cancer cells growth via estrogen receptors](#). *Food and Chemical Toxicology* 59C: 129-136.

Defarge, N. (2016). [Co-Formulants in Glyphosate-Based Herbicides Disrupt Aromatase Activity in Human Cells below Toxic Levels](#). *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 13(3) 264

Despite these serious concerns, the European Commission's proposal authorizes glyphosate for another 9 years and allows glyphosate producers to prove the absence of hormone disruption *after* obtaining approval, a practice deemed inappropriate by the [EU Ombudsman](#) for this sort of case.

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), which is formally responsible for the EU carcinogen classification, is about to review the possible [carcinogenicity, germ cell mutagenicity and reproductive toxicity](#) of glyphosate. That process will not be finalised before the end of 2017.

It is our view that the EU should not take any final decision before the potential health and environmental impacts of glyphosate have been fully established. In addition, and in line with a recent European Parliament resolution, glyphosate should not be approved for use in or close to public parks, public playgrounds and public gardens.

Therefore, we call for the UK to vote against the Commission's proposal for glyphosate renewal at the Standing Committee on Wednesday 18th May thereby prioritising the protection of human health, and the environment.

For further information on glyphosate and its possible role in breast cancer please visit our website to read our [background briefing](#).

Yours sincerely,



Lynn Ladbrook
Chief Executive

c.c. Mr Rory Stewart OBE MP, Mr George Eustice MP, Lord Gardiner of Kimble