

EU proposes temporary approval of weedkiller glyphosate

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The European Commission on Wednesday proposed to extend approval of weedkiller glyphosate in Europe for between 12 and 18 months amid disagreements that the chemical could cause cancer.

The EU's 28 member states are bitterly divided on the dangers of glyphosate, one of the world's most popular weedkillers first used in the Monsanto herbicide Roundup.

Last month, EU national regulators delayed their decision on rolling over the approval of glyphosate for nine years after failing to find the necessary majority.

Among major EU member states, France and Italy oppose re-approving glyphosate, while Germany has so far abstained from making a clear decision.

The commission will now propose that the member states extend the existing approval, which expires on June 30, until conclusions from scientific research by the EU becomes available.

The commission will ask "for 12 to 18 months, we'll see which compromise we reach," said the EU's Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis at a news briefing.

The commission's proposal was "in correlation" with the timing needed to complete the EU's research, he added.

Opponents to glyphosate, led by Greenpeace, point to research from the World Health Organisation that concludes the chemical may be carcinogenic and are calling for the ingredient's outright ban.

But last week, a review carried out by experts from both the WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization said "glyphosate is unlikely to pose a carcinogenic risk to humans from exposure through the diet."

The member states will meet to discuss and perhaps vote on the commission's new proposal on June 6 in Brussels.

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