

EU fails to decide on glyphosate use extension

October 13 2023, by Julien GIRAULT, Marc BURLEIGH



The European Commission says EU agencies do not see significant risk from continued use of the weedkiller.

The EU failed Friday to agree extending the use of glyphosate—a weedkiller the WHO fears could be carcinogenic—because of division

among the bloc's 27 member countries, a European Commission spokesman said.

"No sufficient majority" was reached in a vote on whether to renew glyphosate use for another 10 years, and the matter would now be kicked to an appeals committee in early November, Stefan De Keersmaecker told journalists.

If that committee failed to resolve the matter before current EU authorization for glyphosate ends on December 15, the commission has the power to go ahead and decide whether or not to extend its use, he said.

"In that case, it's for the commission to take a decision on the issue," De Keersmaecker said. He added that the commission proposal could be modified after input from EU countries.

France, an agricultural powerhouse in the bloc, abstained in Friday's closed-door vote on the proposal, French Agriculture Minister Marc Fesneau told AFP, putting weighted majority approval out of reach.

Germany had already said it could not accept extending the use of glyphosate, which is used in popular herbicides such as Roundup from German group Bayer, which acquired it when it bought US company Monsanto.

Austria and Luxembourg had indicated they would vote against the proposal, while Belgium and the Netherlands said they would abstain.

Sweden, Italy and Portugal are among the EU countries in favor of renewing glyphosate use.

A Bayer spokesman said following Friday's inconclusive vote that the

company was "confident that in the next stage of the approval process enough other member states will back the renewal of authorization proposed by the commission".

The previous authorization expired in December 2022 but was extended by a year pending a scientific study of the herbicide.

The current commission proposal would authorize its usage until December 15, 2033, double the previous five-year authorization but less than the 15-year period initially planned.

'Mountains of studies'

The World Health Organization in 2015 classed glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic", spurring concerns about its continued use.

However the European Food Safety Authority in July this year said it "did not identify critical areas of concern" although it recognized there were "data gaps" in reaching that assessment.

The commission said it based its proposal on that EFSA evaluation.

"Mountains of studies and data have been analyzed by the European Food Safety Authority, by the European Chemical Agency, and they have come to the conclusion that there are no major risks of concern to be taken into account for the product of glyphosate, which is the reason why we made our proposal," De Keersmaecker said.

Another spokesman, Eric Mamer, said the commission had followed "scientific advisers who have been reviewing all of the evidence".

Environmental activists said there was scientific evidence that glyphosate may cause cancer, poison [aquatic life](#) and can be fatal to key

pollinators like bees.

The commission has sought to address the concerns by requiring risk mitigations such as [buffer zones](#) around fields sprayed with [glyphosate](#) and equipment to prevent the spray drifting to other areas.

It also urged member states to "pay particular attention" to effects on the environment and set conditions on the herbicide's use.

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