

Dear UK Member of the European Parliament,

We are writing to you ahead of the expected European Parliament plenary vote on the Environment Committee's resolution on glyphosate.

Across the UK, farmers are following the ongoing debate on the re-approval of glyphosate with mounting concern. **The UK Farming Unions firmly believe that the objection proposed by the Environment Committee should not be supported on three main grounds.**

First and foremost, the legal process established for the reauthorisation of active ingredients, agreed through the co-decision making process, places the responsibility of decision making firmly in the hands of Member States: this is clearly stated in Commission Regulation (EU) No 546/2011. It is vital that the European Union's regulatory process is based on solid, scientific evidence that is well scrutinised by an independent body and based on risk assessment. This can only work when all national and European elected officials and policymakers respect the process and outcome. Indeed, such a process for the registration of plant protection products has delivered a recommendation for the continued use of glyphosate.

In its conclusions, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) stated that "glyphosate is unlikely to pose a carcinogenic hazard to humans." This statement was supported by the Rapporteur Member State Germany in their subsequent report. This year, the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) said that scientific evidence "did not meet the criteria to classify glyphosate as a carcinogen, as a mutagen or as toxic for reproduction." Both EFSA and ECHA are agencies funded by the EU that operate independently of the three European legislative and executive institutions as well as Member States. The ongoing situation with the reauthorisation of glyphosate has eroded confidence and certainty in the regulatory system. We urge a return to evidence-led policymaking that is insulated from political bargaining and based on fair scientific risk assessment.

We understand that MEPs want to ensure the safety of glyphosate before it is renewed at EU level. However, glyphosate has been assessed and reviewed by the EU and other regulatory authorities around the world and probably to a greater degree than any active substance to date. The European Parliament's resolution in April 2016 made reference to the opinion of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), despite the fact that their opinions are not part of the EU decision making process. However, the IARC opinion was still reviewed by EFSA and did not prevent them from drawing a positive conclusion on glyphosate, when considering all available scientific evidence.

Secondly, European farmers need glyphosate to provide a safe, secure and affordable food supply while increasingly responding to consumer demand for greater environmental sensitivity. Glyphosate is subject to regulation, as with all other pesticides, so that it is only present within safe levels in the food chain. For any application, farmers are subject to the EU's Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive 2009/128/EC. This ensures that we are certified to use these products and should adopt strategies, such as Integrated Pest Management, that seek to limit the risks of their use. Thereby, we are allowed to access essential products while at the same time being regulated to use them responsibly. It is also an essential tool used in farming practices that actually improve soil structure and require less work with machinery such as minimum or zero tillage, thus helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For environmental conservation too, the substance is used worldwide to manage vegetation to create biodiverse habitats.

Finally, in the light of ongoing and emerging trade deals, any move to further restrict the availability of key plant protection products in Europe risks rendering UK and European agriculture less competitive in global markets. Such a scenario would likely see an increase in European import substitution. Given EFSA's positive opinion on the re-authorisation of glyphosate, the EU could not ban the import of products containing legally established Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) of glyphosate – the most widely used herbicide in the world. Moreover, a recent [report](#) by Oxford Economics, found that the removal of glyphosate from the marketplace would reduce UK production of oilseed rape by 37%, wheat by over 20% and barley by 5%. The report highlights that a ban on glyphosate would reduce agriculture's contribution to UK GDP by £930 million.

If European and UK farmers are to meet the challenge of producing more to feed a growing population and to build resilience to climate change, we must be armed with all the tools in the toolbox, and access to glyphosate is a vital part of this.

It is with the above in mind that the UK Unions ask you to reject the European Parliament's resolution on glyphosate.

Thank you for your consideration.

On behalf of 70,000 farmers, their families and livelihoods:



Meurig Raymond
President, National Farmers Union



Andrew McCornick
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