

## Press Release

15. April 2015

### **Does glyphosate cause cancer? Important gap in German risk assessment**

**Research carried out by the Pesticide Action Network (PAN Germany) has identified an important gap in the risk assessment of glyphosate carried out by the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR). There are already several scientific publications showing that glyphosate can cause oxidative stress to cells, which is a possible cause of cancer. Nevertheless, the BfR did not take this into account in their risk assessment. This omission could be one of the main reasons why the BfR – contrary to the findings of an International Agency of the World Health Organization (WHO) - has concluded that glyphosate is not carcinogenic.**

The toxicologist Dr. Peter Clausing, who assessed the studies available on behalf of PAN Germany, says “The BfR only took two studies on oxidative stress into account and these not in relation to carcinogenesis. However, between 2005 and 2013, there were at least eight further publications reporting that glyphosate can act as oxidative stressor in vertebrates such as fish, amphibians, mice and rats. None of these studies were mentioned even though such effects are very relevant in the assessment of possible carcinogenic effects of glyphosate.”

As the rapporteur member state in the European re-assessment of glyphosate, Germany played a key role in the EU re-evaluation of human health risks due to glyphosate. In January 2014, the authority concluded on the basis of long-term studies in rats and mice, that glyphosate was not carcinogenic.

This assessment was contradicted by a group of 17 experts at the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a body of the World Health Organisation (WHO). These experts classified glyphosate as “probably carcinogenic to humans”. The IARC classification is based on three criteria: Possible carcinogenesis in humans, findings from animal experiments and two lines of mechanistic evidence, one of them that glyphosate can act as an oxidative stressor. Oxidative stress occurs if highly reactive chemicals overwhelm the capacity of cells to deactivate them, and may as a result be a possible cause of cancer.

In a communication released on 1 April 2015, the BfR announced that the final version of its glyphosate evaluation report had been handed over to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). According to this communication, the BfR did not endorse the findings of the IARC, and will ultimately leave this up to the discussion between the relevant international institutions.

On 7 April 2015, European NGOs sent a joint letter to the the responsible EU Commissioner, Vytenis Andriukaitis, pointing out the gap concerning “oxidative stress” in the BfR evaluation.

Now, in a joint letter, PAN Germany and Testbiotech have asked the BfR for an explanation of this omission.

**Contacts:**

PAN Germany, Susan Haffmans, [susan.haffmans@pan-germany.org](mailto:susan.haffmans@pan-germany.org), +49 (0) 40 399191025  
Testbiotech, Andreas Bauer-Panskus, [panskus@testbiotech.org](mailto:panskus@testbiotech.org), +49 (0) 176 61176101

**Further information:**

Questions and Answers on health assessment of glyphosate, BfR (15 January 2014)

[www.bfr.bund.de/cm/349/frequently-asked-questions-on-the-health-assessment-of-glyphosate.pdf](http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/349/frequently-asked-questions-on-the-health-assessment-of-glyphosate.pdf)

IARC (2015), Carcinogenicity of tetrachlorvinphos, parathion, malathion, diazinon, and glyphosate. Lancet Oncol 2015. [www.thelancet.com/journals/lanonc/article/PIIS1470-2045%2815%2970134-8/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanonc/article/PIIS1470-2045%2815%2970134-8/abstract)

Statement of BfR having finalised its report (April 2015): <http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/349/bfr-contribution-to-the-eu-approval-process-of-glyphosate-is-finalised.pdf>

Joint Letter to the European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, Mr. Vytenis Andriukaitis regarding the inclusion of the pesticides Glyphosate and Malathion in the positive list of Regulation 1107/2009 (April 2015). [www.pan-germany.org/download/Letter Mr Andriukaitis April 15 IARC.pdf](http://www.pan-germany.org/download/Letter_Mr_Andriukaitis_April_15_IARC.pdf)