The Incredible Brussels Glyphosate Sheep Dip

In a tale of Brussels corruption almost too crass to believe, the Commission of the European Union is ready to approve a new license for a proven carcinogen, glyphosate, despite international warnings from WHO and independent scientists that it is toxic to humans and animals. Only huge protest has forced the EU to make a surprise postponement of its planned vote to re-approve.

EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis, postponed re-licensing of glyphosate this month not because of his taking a morally courageous stand by going against the corrupt EU Commission food safety advisory group, EFSA, and banning renewal of the license for the world's most widely-used weed-killer, glyphosate. He's fully ready to approve the substance. This, despite the fact that a scientific panel of the World Health Organization labeled glyphosate in 2015 as a probable human and animal carcinogen. He postponed only because four EU member states, unexpectedly, refused to approve renewal. Now Andriukaitis and the GMO weed-killer cartel are scheming to find a new way to ram the renewal through.

Glyphosate is a highly toxic chemical that is the major component of Monsanto's Roundup weed-killer, the world's most used weed-killer. In other combinations glyphosate is also sold by most every agrochemical company in the world including BASF, Syngenta, Dow Chemical, DuPont and China's Zhejiang Wynca Chemical.

Originally developed in a form combined with ultra-toxic adjuvant chemicals by Monsanto chemist John Franz in the 1970's, it soon became the most widely used weed-killer used in the USA and the EU. Today glyphosate is paired with glyphosate-resistant GMO plants such as Monsanto "Roundup Ready" (glyphosate-resistant) soybeans or corn. All GMO plants of Monsanto, for example, by contract, must use Monsanto's glyphosate-based weed-killer Roundup, as in "round up them ugly weeds pardna, an kill 'em all!"

The problem as far as re-licensing glyphosate-based weed-killers is that in March 2015 the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic in humans" based on epidemiological, animal, and in vitro studies.

IARC conducted an independent and extensive review of all the publicly available evidence linking glyphosate to cancer. IARC is specifically qualified to conduct such a review, and it has done so for forty years on behalf of the WHO. It has evaluated hundreds of chemicals, and is regarded as the authoritative body by governments around the world. Non-industry experts testify as to its integrity and scientific credibility.

As more evidence of the high toxicity of glyphosate in combination with other undisclosed additive boosting toxic chemicals, or adjuvants, comes to the light, attention by environmental and health organizations to the danger of a 15 year renewal of license in the EU for glyphosate is intense.

Were the EU to deny license to glyphosate, it would deal a death blow to the world's leading herbicide and as well to Monsanto and the world's GMO industry. That's not just corporate profit, it's geopolitical. Guess who is lobbying frantically in Brussels to win renewal?
I'll wager not many readers have heard of the European Crop Protection Association, or ECPA. Its website states it "represents the interests of the crop protection industry at European level. Our members include all major companies and national associations across Europe. We aim to bring everyone with an interest in crop protection together to share our knowledge and learn from each other. Together, we strive to be problem-solvers in a highly-challenging European environment." Crop protection sounds kinda “goody, goody.” It isn’t.

Succinctly translated, the ECPA mission statement is bullshit. ECPA is a front lobby organization in Brussels for Monsanto, Dow Chemicals, Dupont, Syngenta, Bayer CropSciences, BASF Agro and others. When it was announced that four nations--France, Sweden, The Netherlands and Italy--all opposed renewal of the EU license for glyphosate, Jean-Charles Bocquet, director of ECPA said: “We are very upset that countries were influenced by significant political pressure from the environment committee of the European parliament, NGOs and the precautionary principle.”

That statement by the major agribusiness lobby, especially the statement that ECPA is “very upset that countries were influenced by...the precautionary principle," is little short of astonishing honesty from one of the most corrupt lobby organizations in the EU.

The precautionary principle states that if there is even a suspected risk of causing harm to the public or to the environment, then, in the absence of scientific consensus that the action or policy is not harmful, the burden of proof that it is not harmful falls on those taking an action, in this case, Monsanto and the agrochemical lobby. It's even law in the EU. ECPA admits, it seems, that it has no use for precaution regarding human health or safety. Agribusiness domination “Über Alles.” Better sorry than safe?

**EFSA Sheep Dips Monsanto**

In November, 2015 the EU’s European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) opened the way for the re-licensing of glyphosate. It ruled that "Glyphosate is unlikely to pose a carcinogenic hazard to humans..." EFSA ruled against the WHO determination by relying on six agrochemical-industry-funded studies whose scientific details have never been published in full nor in scientifically independently peer-reviewed journals.

The November EFSA "determination" that glyphosate was not a probable carcinogen and hence safe, was based on a corrupt German government study which, in turn, was simply adopted from an agrochemical industry "study" by the Glyphosate Task Force. In short, a worthless Monsanto and agrochemical industry Glyphosate Task Force study of glyphosate was "sheep-dipped" to give it credibility via the German government, then passed on to an uncritical EFSA in Brussels who uncritically recommended the EU re-license glyphosate.

The term “sheep dip” and “sheep dipped” has dual meaning. Both are appropriate here. To sheep-dip a military or intelligence agent means to disguise him or her that they are not recognizable as agents but rather as civilians blended into the enemy society. The EU Commission has sheep-dipped or disguised its basis for declaring glyphosate safe.

Sheep dip also means to dip sheep in a highly poisonous liquid bath of chemicals to kill the animal’s external parasites such as itch mite, ticks and lice. The original sheep dip solution was based on organo-phosphorus compounds, from which chemical warfare agents were later developed. Organo-phosphorous compounds are very toxic to humans, as they travel easily through the skin. The EFSA and EU Commission are sheep dipping us with its glyphosate ruling.

The EU Commission and EU states divide responsibility for assessing the health and safety of different chemicals for use in the entire EU. The German Federal Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL) was given responsibility for reviewing glyphosate in 2012 for all EU states. Germany submitted its glyphosate renewal assessment report (RAR) in January 2014, a huge document prepared for the Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety by its Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (Bfr).

It was that German Bfr report that EFSA relied on for its November, 2015 ruling. However, the Bfr refused to disclose the two key chronic toxicity studies that their decision was based on because, they stated, those studies would contain "commercially confidential" information. In addition, the German Bfr report recommended not only re-approval of glyphosate for EU use, but it also raised the allowed daily exposure or intake by a whoppin’ 66%, from 0.3 to 0.5 mg per kg body weight per day. No principle of precaution holds with those gents—damn the torpedoes; full speed ahead!
To add to the cesspool of corruption of the entire EU Commission and EFSA in what can only be called a criminal enterprise surrounding re-licensing of glyphosate, the German Bfr Pesticide Committee had employees from pesticide giants that profit from glyphosate, including two from BASF and one from Bayer Crop Sciences, as committee members. Bayer and BASF are both members of the European Crop Protection Association, ECPA. Until recently BASF also had a joint venture with Monsanto to spread GMO crops.

Perhaps most astonishing to those who naively trust bureaucracy in Germany to have scientific integrity when it comes to health and safety, the German Bfr did not draft its report from scratch. Instead Bfr used the work of the Glyphosate Task Force (GTF). GTF is a “consortium of companies joining resources and efforts in order to renew the European glyphosate registration with a joint submission.” Members of the GTF include Monsanto, Dow Agro Sciences and Syngenta among other agrochemical industry companies.

Monsanto and Syngenta sheep-dipped their safety assessment, published by their own Glyphosate Task Force, via the German government’s Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung (BfR)—the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment of the Federal Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection. The German Ministry duly gave its report to Brussels and the EFSA which took the Bfr report as its own report. The faceless EU Commissioner Andriukaitis then took EFSA-Bfr-Glyphosate Task Force (Monsanto & Co) report to justify his intent to re-license despite all evidence to the contrary. In June the glyphosate license that was given in 2002 expires.

EU Commissioner spits at science

The EFSA determination and its unquestioning acceptance by EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis was so egregious that it prompted an immediate protest letter from 96 prominent scientists, including most of the scientists of the WHO’s 2015 IARC study. The letter to Commissioner Andriukaitis declared that the basis of EFSA’s research was “not credible because it is not supported by the evidence. Accordingly, we urge you and the European Commission to disregard the flawed EFSA finding.” Among other “flaws” they argued, EFSA chose to completely dismiss seven positive animal studies showing an increase in cancerous tumors.

EU Commissioner Andriukaitis, in a morally irresponsible reply, wrote, “I am not able to accommodate your request to simply disregard the EFSA conclusion.”

Andriukaitis lied. He could well cite the evidence of the 96 scientists to call for an entirely scientifically independent assessment of glyphosate. Another faceless EU bureaucrat makes fundamental decisions regarding human life while apparently feeling no need to be responsible in a democratic way. It reminds very much of the Soviet faceless bureaucracy during the Stalin era. Andriukaitis, born in the Stalin Soviet era, would know about such things. During the 1940’s his entire family was deported to a Siberia forced labor camp where Andriukaitis was born in 1951 and lived there until he was seven.

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