



Press release

Générations Futures' investigation: 53.3% of food samples analysed on French market contained glyphosate residues

Paris/Brussels, 14 September 2017 – 53.3% of cereal- and leguminous products that are widely available in French supermarkets contain traces of glyphosate, demonstrate test results from Générations Futures (1). Glyphosate is the most widely-used herbicide globally and has been classified as “likely carcinogenic” by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). The EU will decide on the re-authorisation of the use of the herbicide this December.

Context

In March 2015, a few months before the expiry date of the European license for glyphosate, experts from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified the substance as “likely carcinogenic” for humans. Since then, a battle of interest has been raging in Brussels. Numerous scientists and NGOs – supported by some member states including France – demand that this dangerous substance not be reauthorised. Over 1 million European citizens are also demanding action against glyphosate, increasing the pressure on European institutions even further (2). The EU will have to make a decision on the re-authorisation of glyphosate by 15 December 2017.

Why such an investigation?

Glyphosate is the most-used herbicide in the world. In France, 8,656 tons of glyphosate were sold in 2013 alone; that is equivalent to more than 1/8th of active pesticide substances sold that year. While everyone appears to be exposed to the herbicide, its presence in food is rarely investigated. It is against this backdrop that Générations Futures wanted to learn more about the extent to which food items in France are contaminated with glyphosate. The study made use of a specific research method for the sole detection of glyphosate and AMPA, glyphosate's main metabolite.

Study presentation

Considering the high cost of the investigation, Générations Futures decided to only include those food items that are already suspected to contain residues of glyphosate, namely cereal-based items and leguminous plants which include peas and lentils. A specialised laboratory analysed 30 food products that are widely available in supermarkets:

- 18 cereal-based samples: 8 samples of breakfast cereals, 7 samples of pasta, 3 other samples (dry breads, crackers)
- 12 samples of dry leguminous plants: 7 samples of lentils, 2 samples of chick peas, 2 samples of dry beans, 1 sample of split pea.

Results?

The test results show that **16 out of 30 samples, or 53.3% contain glyphosate.**

- **7 out of the 8 breakfast cereals analysed (or 87.5%)**
- **7 out of the 12 leguminous plants analysed (or 58.3%)**

- **2 out of the 12 pastas analysed (or 28.5%)**
- **None of the other 3 cereal-based products (dry breads, crackers)**
- **AMPA – a product of glyphosate degradation, also called metabolite – was found in 3 samples, or 10% of the total.**

“As illustrated by our investigation, the presence of glyphosate residues in the targeted food items is frequent and sometimes accompanied by the presence of the AMPA metabolite. This partly explains why those people tested for glyphosate residues are found to be contaminated, as shown by our glyphosate search in urine samples from April 2017”, says François Veillerette, director and spokesperson of Générations Futures.

“It is therefore urgent for the European Union to abandon the use of this substance, which has been classified as likely carcinogenic by IARC, and to encourage a profound rethink of our agriculture model that has become excessively dependent on synthetic pesticides. France - through the voices of Ministers Hulot and Philippe - has declared itself against the re-authorisation of glyphosate. It will now have to convince other governments to join its opposition before EU ministers next discuss the re-authorisation of the pesticides on 5 and 6 October”, he concludes.

“This study once again highlights the lack of robust European regulation on chemicals that contaminate our food – either through the use of toxic pesticides in agriculture or toxic chemicals in food wrappings”, adds Genon K. Jensen, Executive Director of the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL). “When a pesticide that is likely carcinogenic and associated with numerous other health disorders is found in a majority of the food samples tested, it is time for our governments to take their responsibility. This should start by opposing the re-authorisation of glyphosate in the EU and overhauling the regulation on food packaging in order to protect citizens from the contamination of chemicals.”

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Notes:

1. This press release is adapted from the French original version: *Résultats exclusifs de recherche de glyphosate dans des aliments vendus en France* Paris, 14 September 2017, <https://www.generations-futures.fr/actualites/glyphosate-residus-aliments-rapport/>
2. Over one million Europeans signed the European Citizens' Initiative to ban glyphosate, reform the EU pesticide approval process, and set mandatory targets to reduce pesticide use in the EU. This ECI has achieved the requirements set by the EU in less than five months, making it the fastest-growing ECI since the EU introduced this tool in 2012. <https://stopglyphosate.org/en/>

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