STELLA KYRIAKIDES
MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Rue de la Loi, 200
B-1049 Brussels – Berl 10/380
stella.kyriakides@ec.europa.eu

Brussels, 9 January 2023

Dear Mr Dermine,

Thank you for the letter of 14 December 2022, submitted on behalf of 28 environmental and health related non-governmental organisations, in which you call for an immediate ban of glyphosate in the EU due to concerns about its impact on health and on the environment and stress that the concern of citizens must be listened to.

Let me first underline that the regulatory framework in the EU establishes a comprehensive and rigorous process to examine all available information so that decision making is based on robust and reliable science. I have full confidence in our agencies that are tasked with carrying out assessments for active substances such as glyphosate, i.e. the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) that is responsible for classification and labelling and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) that is responsible for the risk assessment process.

The Commission is committed to ensuring that the ongoing renewal process for glyphosate is conducted in full compliance with the applicable legislation. This includes thorough evaluation of all relevant scientific and technical information on the properties of glyphosate and transparency throughout the process.

While it is indeed regrettable that the renewal process of glyphosate has been delayed beyond the timeline originally foreseen, the amount of information that has to be assessed is significantly larger compared to other active substances, as confirmed by EFSA and ECHA in their letter[1] of 10 May 2022.

[1] https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/pesticides_renew_glyphosate_letter-kyriakides_en.pdf

Mr Martin Dermine
Pesticide Action Network Europe
E-mail: martin@pan-europe.info

I have called on the agencies[2] to conduct their work as quickly and transparently as possible, while thoroughly evaluating all available data and addressing all evidence, comments and remarks provided during the public consultation.

I also want to underline that so far, neither the Member States conducting the evaluation (the Assessment Group on Glyphosate, "AGG"), nor ECHA or EFSA have identified evidence demonstrating that glyphosate no longer fulfils the approval criteria. In particular, the Committee for Risk Assessment (RAC) of ECHA concluded that based on the available evidence, glyphosate does not meet the criteria to be classified as carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic for reproduction. RAC confirmed the existing harmonised classification (serious eye damage and toxic to aquatic life with lasting effects). While this confirms the hazards, the risks that these may pose to health and the environment are examined as part of the ongoing peer review process.

You mention recent scientific findings on glyphosate that in your view would justify an immediate ban of glyphosate. Please be informed that the issues you highlight are being examined as part of the ongoing peer review process. I would also like to recall that in a letter dated 13 October 2021 to which I responded[3], 41 NGOs (including some which also signed the letter of 14 December 2022) called for all available data to be thoroughly taken into account in the process. The Commission agrees that all potential effects of glyphosate on human and animal health and the environment must be assessed according to the latest scientific and technical knowledge in order to ensure a process of high quality and integrity, leading to a well-grounded decision on whether or not the approval can be renewed.

Against this background, Article 17 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 clearly states that where for reasons beyond the control of the applicant it appears that the approval of an active substance is likely to expire before a decision has been taken on renewal, the Commission must adopt a decision postponing the expiry of the approval for a period sufficiently long to allow for an examination of the application. This is why on 2 December the Commission adopted a Regulation extending the approval period of glyphosate for one year.

[2] https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/pesticides_renew_glyphosate_final-reg-letter-to-efsa-echa_en.pdf

[3] https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/pesticides_renew_glyphosate_ngo-open-letter_com-reply_20211115.pdf

Let me conclude by emphasising that the Commission only renews the approvals of active substances for use in PPPs when all approval criteria laid down in the Regulation are fulfilled, setting conditions and restrictions where appropriate. This approach will also be followed in the case of glyphosate once the EFSA Conclusion is available.

Yours sincerely,