

EU Trade Unions Call for Immediate Ban on Glyphosate Herbicides to Protect Workers

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The European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT) has called for an immediate ban on glyphosate-based herbicides and other harmful pesticides.

by [Sustainable Pulse](#)

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In a [press release](#) on Friday EFFAT stated “Protecting agri-workers’ health is EFFAT’s number one priority. EFFAT calls for an immediate ban on glyphosate in the renewal process, which ends in 2022. EFFAT also calls for more investments in the promotion of alternatives to the use of glyphosate and other harmful pesticides and urges a clear governance in charge of a smooth transition with the involvement of Trade Unions. Existing jobs must be protected and new quality ones created.

“The newly [adopted position](#) on the issue responds to EFFAT’s commitment to a more sustainable agriculture which underpins, inter alia, free trade agreements with binding requirement to respect highest environmental and social standards, investments in workers’ skills, social protection and research and development towards sustainable pest management.

“As sufficient evidence exists on the risks related to the use of glyphosate for workers, human health and biodiversity,

EFFAT calls for the immediate ban of glyphosate as an active substance in herbicide products in the renewal process which is expected to end in 2022. The precautionary principle should guide EFSA and ECHA assessments.

Glyphosate Box

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“If a transition period is to be set, it should be as short as possible and only apply for limited cases in professional use, whilst for uses in public areas, private gardens, railway tracks, desiccation, and all cases where Integrated Pest management (IPM) can be used, the ban should apply immediately. In any case, there should be no more use of glyphosate in Europe from 2024.

“EFSA, ECHA and the European Commission should carry out their assessment in a transparent and reliable way, free of the influence of the agro-chemical industry. The protection of agricultural workers’ health and safety must be considered as one of the main priorities throughout the scientific evaluation that will guide the process. The use of Personal protective equipment (PPE) should not be given a prominent position in the scientific assessment, as evidence shows that PPE is not always available, and its effectiveness is often over-estimated.

“Alternatives to the use of glyphosate and other harmful chemicals already exist and must be further promoted. This includes agronomic practices, mechanical and biological weed control, animal grazing and natural herbicides.

“A 13-week pilot study run by the Ramazzini Institute in Bologna in 2019 demonstrates that exposure to glyphosate-based herbicides from prenatal period to adulthood induced endocrine disruptive effects and altered reproductive developmental parameters in male and female rats. A recent study has proven glyphosate acts as an endocrine disruptor in the case of exposure during pregnancy.

“EFFAT supports the ambitious environmental objectives of the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy, including the 50% reduction target for use and risk of pesticides by 2030.¹ However, acting solely at a European level will not be sufficient to protect consumers’ health, safeguard our ecosystems and biodiversity and prevent soil erosion. On the contrary, it may affect jobs and the competitiveness of the EU agriculture sector. A vision towards a more sustainable agriculture without glyphosate and other hazardous chemical must be pursued at a global level. The EU should be at the forefront of this radical change, since the decisions taken in the EU will also have a substantial impact in other countries.

“It is not acceptable that harmful pesticides already banned in the EU keep being produced and exported by European agro-chemical companies. Foodstuff produced using pesticides banned in Europe should not enter the EU market.

“If the EU were to adopt a different approach to Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), this could contribute to building a more sustainable vision for the agriculture sector. Agriculture and food always require specific attention in the negotiation of FTAs, as the economic, social and environmental sustainability of these sectors is fragile and easily disrupted. Moreover, the respect of equal environmental and social standards must be a precondition to engage in negotiations.”

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