

Henry Miller: UN glyphosate finding glosses over data to support ideological conclusion

For the first time since 1991, the focus of this International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) review was on pesticides. [At this meeting](#), five pesticides were evaluated and three of them were classified as “probably carcinogenic.” But neither the U.S. EPA nor the European Chemical Agency (ECHA) had previously classified the three active ingredients as being carcinogenic. Why the discrepancy?

The data (and a selected set of data, at that) were reviewed to determine whether glyphosate is capable of causing cancer. As with common chemicals like sugar, salt and water, and foods like nutmeg and licorice, glyphosate at very high doses is capable of causing harm to humans. That’s what the IARC “2A” designation—“probably carcinogenic to humans”—essentially means. But one of the seminal tenets of toxicology is that “the dose makes the poison,” and the reality is that glyphosate is not a human health risk even at levels of exposure that are more than 100 times higher than the human exposures that occur under conditions consistent with the product’s labeling.

Thus, IARC publishes qualitative assessments, not quantitative assessments of risk. That is left to regulatory agencies.

Regulatory agencies typically review more data and in much more depth than the IARC. For glyphosate, seven companies have submitted data from multiple types of studies, which are evaluated by the U.S. EPA, the German Risk Agency (BfR) and other global regulatory agencies.

What does IARC’s decision mean to consumers and farmers? Nothing. They should feel confident that global regulatory agencies will continue to do their risk assessments with the proper amount of scientific rigor and to make the critical distinction between hazard and risk.

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