

To maintain yields without herbicides, U.S. would need 55 million laborers to hand weed crops

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Do you ever wonder why elementary schools close during July and August? Historically, children were needed to work in the farms then, in particular to pull weeds. Before herbicides were developed, this back-breaking job of hand weeding crops landed on the littlest limbs. Growing up on a mixed fruit and vegetable farm in Southern Ontario, I was one of those child labourers. . . .

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. . . .In the 1960s, the introduction of the first herbicides made farming easier, cheaper and more productive. Farmers could keep weeds down for pennies, increase yields and allow their children to enjoy a summer holiday. . . .

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. . . .With the ever-improving technology and the introduction of glyphosate-resistant seed varieties, California regulators in 2004 went so far as to ban the practice of hand weeding altogether because of the harsh unnecessary occupational health consequences. This legislation had one small caveat though. The [organic industry lobbied to be exempted from the legislation](#) since they don't use herbicides and won the right to continue using children to pull the weeds out on organic farms. Another great victory for the formidable, but rather unethical, organic farming lobby.

So the organic lobby is now making progress in their campaign to ban glyphosate, and well, all herbicides. . . .Leonard Gianessi calculated that, in order to maintain US crop yields today without herbicides, Americans will need to recruit [55 million teenagers to weed the farms](#). . . . This is one more situation where I find myself watching the success of Stupid in banning a beneficial pesticide with extremely low toxicity without any understanding what the consequences will be. . . .

Read full, original post: The Pre-Glyphosate Generation: I was a Child Labourer