

Viewpoint: US funding for IARC cancer agency should be frozen until changes are made

Question: When is a carcinogen not necessarily a carcinogen?

Answer: When the labelling is done by the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a French-based institution that is having a big and unjustified impact on American law and our economy.

That's the majority view from an investigation by the U.S. House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, which is trying to understand how IARC classified the most commonly used herbicide in the world as a probable carcinogen, while nearly every government agency which evaluated the chemical, including our own EPA, reached the opposite conclusion.

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The fact is that IARC badly needs to be reformed, and some fundamental changes need to be made.

For starters, the U.N. agency should acknowledge that its reports have been repeatedly misused, more effectively communicate that its findings are not relevant to risk, and should not be used for inappropriate warnings, such as for California's Proposition 65.

Better yet, IARC should do actual risk-assessments, which would result in far fewer needless headline-grabbing carcinogen classifications. And it should operate transparently; allowing for outside peer-review, public engagement, and, yes, oversight from its donors.

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U.S. taxpayers should let their representatives know that because Americans support responsible global public health programs, evidence-based science, and transparent government, IARC funding should be frozen until it institutes these changes.

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