Viewpoint: Misguided attacks on glyphosate ‘dangers’ ignore how the weedkiller enables sustainable soil systems in prairies and grasslands

Glyphosate is Canada’s top-selling pesticide, mostly used in agriculture as a herbicide and to desiccate crops for harvest. While it has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years, glyphosate continues to play an important weed management role on many western Canadian farms.

A study by University of Saskatchewan researchers suggests glyphosate has served another important function — making Prairie agriculture more sustainable.

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A key finding was farmers had shifted away from cropping systems that utilized intensive tillage and summerfallow to no-till systems. This was due in part to the advent of glyphosate and the complementary technology of genetically engineered herbicide-tolerant crops in the 1990s, which meant producers no longer had to rely on tillage as their main form of weed control.

[Stuart] Smyth says the two technologies, by slashing the reliance on intensive tillage practices and summerfallows in favour of no-till systems, enabled farmers to boost sustainability through improved soil quality, less erosion and reduced fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

According to Smyth, the study also illustrates how glyphosate and herbicide-tolerant crops have been a main driver of increased carbon sequestration in Saskatchewan’s agricultural soil by facilitating the adoption of conservation tillage and reduced summerfallow practices.

This is an excerpt. Read the original post here