



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement by Vice Chairman Frank Lucas (R-Okla.)

In Defense of Scientific Integrity: Examining the IARC Monograph Programme and Glyphosate Review

Vice Chairman Lucas: Thank you, Chairman Smith, for holding this hearing today on the important topic of the scientific integrity of the International Agency for Research on Cancer's (IARC) Monograph Programme. I look forward to hearing from our panel of expert witnesses this morning and want to thank them for their voluntary appearance before this committee.

First recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1965, IARC began as a French initiative to find and root out cancer both in France and around the world. In pursuit of this goal, one of IARC's many endeavors was the identification and classification of known carcinogens. This has come to be known as the Monograph Programme.

While the effort at the time represented the most modern understanding of cancer and its environmental causes, the methods of IARC's Monograph Programme have remained largely unchanged over the years, even as our understanding of cancer has evolved.

This has caused IARC to reach conclusions that not only create unnecessary fear in people, but, in some cases, even causes IARC to reach conclusions that contradict the best available science.

This is unfortunate in any scientific program, but is completely unacceptable in one where the United States, through the NIH and NIEHS, provides the majority of funding. This is even more true when IARC's conclusions are then utilized as the basis for regulation in California of products, like Roundup, that contain glyphosate.

In 2015, the IARC Monograph Programme categorized glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic to humans." As Chairman Smith explained, IARC's glyphosate monograph contained substantial portions of alterations and deletions, it appears, to aid the monograph in drawing a particular conclusion.

While the appearance of agenda-driven manipulation is troubling on its own, it is even more so when considering that IARC's final conclusion is not only on the fringe of the scientific world, but is completely and totally by itself.

Respected scientific bodies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, the European Food Safety Agency or the IARC's parent body, the WHO, have repeatedly found there to be no risk posed to humans when glyphosate is used as directed. Yet, the IARC Monograph

Program persists, reviewing and labeling over 900 substances as “possible” or “probable” carcinogens over the last 40-plus years all the while only labeling one as non-carcinogenic.

IARC's explanation for all this is that they simply assess hazard and not risk, therefore the actual probability that these substances cause cancer cannot be gleaned from their monographs. If left unchallenged, this would excuse IARC's bad behavior and give a de facto blessing to their refusal to bring their scientific methods into the modern age. This kind of shoddy work is unacceptable from any scientific body, let alone one funded by the American taxpayer.

The modern agricultural revolution, of which glyphosate and other IARC-labeled “carcinogenic” herbicides have played an enormous role, has helped to feed the world and enabled struggling nations to grow and gain a footing on the world stage. All of this, however, is threatened by IARC's flawed scientific analysis.

Far too often, farmers, ranchers and small businesses find themselves on the receiving end of burdensome regulations, like those that stem from IARC's misleading assessments. We should be working to reduce the burdens of these hardworking Americans, not funding the growth of them; and when a federal or international agency makes decisions that have the potential to directly and negatively impact American citizens, we in Congress have a duty to ask questions and address the concerns of our constituents.

Similarly, when a federal or international agency utilizes American tax dollars to reach conclusions that directly contradict the overwhelming majority of scientific knowledge, we have a duty to ask how they came to that conclusion. This committee has, on several occasions, attempted to gain a greater understanding of IARC's decision-making processes. Unfortunately, the committee's simple request for IARC to provide a witness to testify on the Monograph Programme has been met with resistance.

The pursuit of an awesome goal like the eradication of cancer should not, and cannot, prevent us from asking questions regarding the processes and methods utilized to reach a certain conclusion. Simply because an organization has a commendable goal should never mean the conclusions it draws are beyond reproach.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today not only about the problems in the methods and procedures of the IARC Monograph Programme, of which there are many, but also about the fixes they believe can be made to bring the Monograph Programme back in line with modern science.

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