



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

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Statement by Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

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

Chairman Smith: Today we will examine the U.S. taxpayer-funded IARC Monograph Programme and its assessment of the herbicide glyphosate, more commonly known as Roundup. We must ensure that the underlying science behind assessments that influence policy and the public is based on sound science.

The American people deserve to know the truth about which substances are safe and which ones pose a risk. Glyphosate is the most widely used herbicide in the world. Americans and people across the globe rely on these crops for high quality, affordable food.

There are real repercussions to IARC's unsubstantiated claims, which are not backed by reliable data. Labeling requirements will drive costs up for farmers and consumers and create unjustified public fear. IARC's irresponsible handling of data does real harm to job creators and the public's view of the scientific process.

Agencies such as IARC have a responsibility to adhere to the scientific method and evaluate all relevant scientific studies, weigh the evidence, and come to a conclusion that can be reproduced. Following the scientific method also means forming a conclusion only after all data has been considered.

According to information gathered by the committee, there appear to be serious problems with the science underlying IARC's assessment of glyphosate. The news media recently revealed evidence of data deletion and manipulation of draft assessments before final publication.

IARC's conclusion about glyphosate relied only on data that was favorable to its conclusion and ignored contradictory data. In its assessment, IARC did no direct evaluation of glyphosate's effect on humans. Specifically, IARC appears to have intentionally omitted data that showed glyphosate does not cause cancer.

It's no surprise that the Monograph Programme has refused to publish any of its draft assessments. If there is nothing to hide, why the secrecy?

The manipulation of scientific data and lack of transparency is not the only defect in IARC's glyphosate assessment. Besides altering the data used in the assessment, the Monograph Working Group failed to consider the most significant study on human exposure to glyphosate.

The Agricultural Health Study (AHS), which was a result of a collaboration of several federal agencies such as the National Cancer Institute (NCI), National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), presented information they had collected on over 50,000 humans. Aaron Blair, the chair of the Monograph Programme at the time, admitted in a deposition that the study would have “altered IARC’s analysis.” However, this study was not considered by IARC.

In 2015, IARC published its findings on glyphosate, categorizing the herbicide as “probably” causing cancer. It has become apparent that the Monograph on glyphosate uses nothing more than cherry-picked science created by those that have a financial stake in the resulting conclusions.

The Monograph Programme is alone in its determination that glyphosate poses a cancer threat. Both the EPA and EFSA, a European regulatory agency, have reviewed glyphosate and determined that the chemical is unlikely to cause cancer.

Last December, the EPA released a Draft Human Health Risk Assessment evaluating the potential of glyphosate to cause cancer. The EPA body of research was then evaluated by a Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) composed of experts appointed during the Obama administration. The EPA’s draft assessment reviewed IARC’s glyphosate monograph and came to the conclusion that glyphosate is unlikely to cause cancer.

The committee has written several letters expressing concerns about the lack of sound science and biases found in IARC’s program. When asked to provide a witness for this hearing, IARC Director Wild refused to attend. No doubt he could not defend IARC’s glyphosate findings.

The selective use of data and the lack of public disclosure raise questions about why IARC should receive any government funding in the future.

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