

Who wants to extend the authorization of glyphosate? (Part 2)

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Дата: 18.03.2016 Брой: 3/2016



The latest results from research on the harmfulness of glyphosate to living organisms and the environment have cast serious doubt on the decision-making process of the European institutions, which blindly follow corporate interests and jeopardise the health of their own citizens. It is outrageous that scientific theses, often completely opposing, are being speculated with in order to create pressure in the public sphere. How are decisions made in the EC and how do the risk assessment bodies operate?

While two quarrel, a third one profits.

The scientists whose studies alerted the World Health Organization have been officially announced, and their reports are publicly available. At the same time, the European Food Safety Authority kept its authors secret, under the pretext that their personal protection must be ensured.

The standard procedure for placing a new product on the market or extending an already authorised one proceeds as follows: the costs for toxicological studies are borne entirely by the manufacturing company, but the information, documentation and the scientific studies themselves are carried out by competent authorities, which assess the product on the basis of international standards for quality and practical relevance. *In relation to the control of pesticides in food, including the herbicide “glyphosate”, in the implementation of Regulation No 396/2005, a three-year programme is currently being implemented within the European Union, including in Bulgaria, adopted by Regulation (EU) No 400/2014 on a coordinated multiannual control programme of the Union. It ensures compliance with the maximum residue levels of pesticides in food of animal and plant origin and the assessment of consumer exposure to these residues.*

However, the European food authorities rely on another unwritten practice. In a 2013 report on the German television channel ZDF, the direct link between manufacturer and evaluator is shown in an entirely unambiguous manner. In the role of manufacturer is the American company Monsanto, which provides ready-made reports with preliminary results to the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment in Berlin. The programme emphasises the complete dependence of this type of European organisation on industrial players, which promote their own theories about the quality and safety of their products, corresponding solely to their corporate interests. In other words, the role of the competent authorities is reduced merely to placing signatures and stamps on important documents “guaranteeing” the quality and control of the use of the respective product.

In Bulgaria in 2014, **515 thousand litres of plant protection products with the active substance “glyphosate”** were placed on the market, as was officially announced during Parliamentary Control on 16 February by the Minister of Agriculture Desislava Taneva in response to a parliamentary question regarding the control of the use of the herbicide glyphosate in Bulgarian agriculture and its distribution in various foods. In 2016, the controversial substance will be examined, and all results obtained will be submitted by the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency (BFSA) to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), which will provide a final assessment of the results and decide whether appropriate restrictions should be introduced. It is also noteworthy that at the beginning of the year **the BFSA and the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) signed a cooperation agreement** within the framework of the International Green Week exhibition for agriculture, food and horticulture in Berlin, Germany. The harmonisation of methods for control and risk assessment between the two agencies is a leading strategy of the German institute, which for this purpose will provide laboratory equipment free of charge to the Bulgarian side. The equipment provided includes technical means for microbiological testing of food, diagnosis of animal diseases, etc. Auxiliary equipment necessary for chemical analyses and serological studies will also be donated.

European decision-making

A number of measures, which often concern only legislation on food safety and the control of pesticides in food, include the “right of scrutiny” of the European Parliament, in accordance with the regulatory procedure. If a majority of its Members adopt a resolution objecting to the draft

measure, it will not be adopted by the Commission, which may subsequently submit an amended draft or present another legislative proposal. The issue is that the proposals are drawn up in specialised committees whose powers are delegated by the Commission itself. The committees are regularly attended by experts from the ministries of the Member States, who can manipulate the proposals they submit indefinitely. Who wants to extend the authorisation of glyphosate and how this will happen is more than clear; what is scandalous, however, is that scientific theses, often completely opposing, are being speculated with in order to create pressure in the public sphere and to delegate decision-making to specific corporate interests in agribusiness.