



FLOOR STATEMENTS
NOVEMBER 2019 WTO SPS COMMITTEE - FORMAL MEETING

AGENDA ITEM 4(E)(II): CODEX MRLS FOR GLYPHOSATE

Communication from the United States of America

The following communication, received on 12 November 2019, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of the United States of America.

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1. The United States again raises concern over actions by Members to restrict the use of glyphosate or withdraw glyphosate MRLs without clear scientific justification.
 2. Scientific and regulatory authorities worldwide have re-evaluated and reconfirmed the authorization status of this crop protection tool, making it not only one of the most widely used, but also one of the most rigorously evaluated and regulated.
 3. Recall that in 2016, the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) held a special session to re-evaluate glyphosate in response to a hazard assessment from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).
 4. After reviewing the extensive body of evidence and conducting a robust risk assessment, JMPR reaffirmed that dietary exposure to glyphosate does not pose a risk to consumers. The Codex Alimentarius Commission subsequently reaffirmed all existing glyphosate MRLs.
 5. In this regard, we recall the mandate given to the Committee in Paragraph 4 of Article 12 of the SPS Agreement, to monitor trade impact related to the non-use of international standards, and the direction given in G/SPS/11/Rev.1, to look to the severity of the problems caused to the trade in the goods covered by the international standard.
 6. Despite consistent findings across independent scientific and regulatory bodies, it is clear that glyphosate still poses a difficult risk communication challenge. The publication of the IARC report and subsequent media attention has misinformed consumers and contributed to a lack of trust in science- and risk-based decision making.
 7. In August 2019, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued guidance to registrants of glyphosate advising them that the US EPA will no longer approve product labels claiming glyphosate is known to cause cancer—a false claim that does not meet the Agency’s statutory label requirements, noting that it is critical that federal regulatory agencies relay to consumers accurate, science-based information about the risks pesticides pose to them.
 8. We are deeply concerned that unjustified or disproportionate restrictions on glyphosate will only serve to fuel consumer doubts, damage public trust, and undermine the integrity of government regulators.
 9. That is why we call on all Members to continue observance of the Codex MRLs for glyphosate, or to establish SPS measures related to glyphosate on the basis of science-based risk assessments.

10. The World Health Organization has raised concern that IARC could unintentionally undermine the rigorous scientific and risk-based underpinning of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. To that end, we understand that the WHO Secretariat has been working with IARC to ensure that substances which have been evaluated by the Joint FAO-WHO Expert Committees are not subject to the limited, less-robust hazard assessments produced by IARC.

11. Given the ongoing challenges surrounding glyphosate, particularly with regard to scientific justification, we strongly support efforts by this Committee to reinforce the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and strengthen collective understanding of the scientific foundations of the SPS Agreement.

12. We further invite Members to consider how this Committee can work to promote greater understanding of the principles of risk analysis, and how objective, science-based standards support efficient production and trade of safe, affordable food to meet global demands.

13. Chair, we appreciate the discussions in this Committee on actions to improve transparency and support greater shared understanding of concerns raised in Committee. We will therefore submit this statement to the Secretariat and request its issuance as a GEN document.
