



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

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CAP submits memorandum calling for ban on the sale of glyphosate-based herbicides

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) submitted a memorandum to the Ministry of Agriculture & Food Industries and the Pesticides Board on 25 September 2020 urging for a ban on glyphosate and glyphosate-based herbicides because of its toxic effects on human health, animals and the environment.

Glyphosate, categorised as a probable human carcinogen, is increasingly associated with health problems. It was found that people with high exposures to the herbicide have increased risk of developing a type of cancer called non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

These evidences are alarming as glyphosate is the most used herbicide in human history. A common glyphosate-based herbicide (GBH) is Roundup, developed by Monsanto, which Bayer acquired in 2018.

Overall it is reported that some 8.6 billion kilogrammes of GBHs have been sprayed worldwide since 1974. In addition, glyphosate use has increased 15-fold since genetically engineered (GE) crops were introduced in 1996, the majority of which are glyphosate-tolerant (GT) GE plants.

Concerns over the health impacts of glyphosate came to a head with the World Health Organization's (WHO) International Agency for Research on Cancer's (IARC) categorisation of the herbicide as a probable carcinogen to humans in 2015 and have been growing since with increasing evidence of harm to humans, culminating in legal suits against its producer, Monsanto.

A meta-analysis which evaluated all published human studies has found compelling evidence that people with high exposures to GBHs had a 41% increased risk of developing non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL), with researchers Zhang et.al concluding that there is "a compelling link" between the two factors.

Monsanto and its German-owner, Bayer AG, face more than 9,000 lawsuits in the United States of America, brought by people suffering from NHL who blame Monsanto's GBH for their disease.

In March 2019, a federal jury ruled that Monsanto was liable for a California man's cancer and ordered the company to pay US\$80 million in damages. The jury ruled that Roundup's design was "defective", that the product lacked sufficient cancer warnings, and that Monsanto was negligent in its failure to warn the plaintiff of the NHL risk.

As consumers, we may think that we are safe because we are not exposed directly to glyphosate during the spraying of the herbicide. Nonetheless, we are exposed to glyphosate residues in or on crops, particularly GE crops, that enters through the food (and feed) chain. Glyphosate residues are neither removed by washing or broken down by cooking.

The Department of Biosafety, Malaysia website reveals that 40 genetically engineered crops have been approved for food, feed and processing, of which 11 are glyphosate-tolerant. Consumers must not assume that approval of the herbicide-tolerant GE food or feed products by regulatory bodies is tantamount to a clean bill of health.

CAP's memorandum to the authorities also highlighted findings of glyphosate and GBHs harm to soil health, bees, amphibians, as well as increase the rate of antibiotic resistance development in bacteria.

Given the scientific evidence of the harm that glyphosate and GBHs pose to human and environmental health, many local authorities, as well as national governments in about 40 countries, have issued outright bans on glyphosate, imposed restrictions or have issued statements of intention to ban or restrict glyphosate-based herbicides.

In view of its toxicity, Malaysia should immediately take measures to ban glyphosate-based herbicides and any food and feed produced using glyphosate, including GE glyphosate-tolerant food and feed.

The Department of Biosafety of Malaysia should review and revoke the approvals for glyphosate-tolerant GE food and feed products in light of the increasing evidence of harm from glyphosate and GBHs.

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Note: The Briefing Paper titled "The Impacts Of Glyphosate On Human And Environmental Health" can be viewed at https://consumer.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CAP-Briefing-Paper_Impacts-of-Glyphosate-on-Human-Environmental-Health_1.pdf