

Mr Jean-Claude Juncker,
President of the European Commission,
European Commission,
Rue de la Loi 200,
1049 Brussels
Belgium

November 3rd 2017

Dear President Juncker,

Re: The re-authorisation of the active substance glyphosate

We are writing to you ahead of the expected Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (SCoPAFF) meeting on 9th November and the decision on the reauthorisation of glyphosate.

Across the UK, farmers are following the ongoing debate on the re-approval of glyphosate with mounting concern. **The UK Farming Unions firmly believe that the EU's science-based decision making process should be upheld and glyphosate reauthorised for the maximum period possible.** Both the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) have concluded that glyphosate cannot be considered carcinogenic and therefore there should be no safety concerns related to its reauthorisation for the maximum period of 15 years.

The prolonged situation with the reauthorisation of glyphosate has eroded confidence and certainty in the regulatory system. We urge a return to evidence-led policymaking that is insulated from political bargaining and based on fair scientific risk assessment.

We understand that MEPs and citizens across the EU want to ensure the safety of glyphosate before it is renewed at EU level. However, glyphosate has been assessed and reviewed by the EU and other regulatory authorities around the world and probably to a greater degree than any active substance to date.

European farmers need glyphosate to provide a safe, secure and affordable food supply while increasingly responding to consumer demand for greater environmental sensitivity. Glyphosate is subject to regulation, as with all other pesticides, so that it is only present within safe levels in the food chain. Maximum residue levels (MRLs) are in place to ensure there is no risk to human health. The use of pesticides is closely scrutinised and all member states have adopted the principles within the EU's Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive 2009/128/EC. This ensures that spray operators are trained and certified to use these products and should adopt strategies, such as Integrated Pest Management, that seek to limit the risks of their use. Thereby, we are allowed to access essential products while at the same time being regulated to use them responsibly.

Glyphosate is an essential tool for farmers and allows conservation agriculture to take place. Farmers recognise the importance of soil and do all they can to enhance soil health and structure. Farmers use cover crops between commercial crops to improve soil structure and drainage as well as reduce soil erosion. Without access to glyphosate, it would not be viable to plant these biodiverse rich cover crops as part of a farming rotation. This form of conservation agriculture requires less work with machinery and allows farmers to adopt practices such as minimum or zero tillage, thus helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Glyphosate also plays an important role in preparing the crop prior to harvest, particularly where the growing season is short.

If European and UK farmers are to meet the challenge of producing more to feed a growing population and to build resilience to climate change, we must be armed with all the tools in the toolbox, and access to glyphosate is a vital part of this.

It is with the above in mind that the UK Farming Unions ask you to stand by your own science and regulatory procedure, and reauthorise glyphosate for the maximum period possible and not allow the issue to be politicised any longer. Not delivering would jeopardise confidence in the whole EU food safety system and in particular in EFSA's role.

Thank you for your consideration. Please note that a copy of this letter has been sent to your colleagues Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis and Commissioner Phil Hogan.

On behalf of 70,000 farmers, their families and livelihoods:

Yours sincerely,



Meurig Raymond
President, National Farmers Union



Andrew McCornick
President, National Farmers Union of Scotland



Stephen James
President, NFU Cymru



Barclay Bell
President, Ulster Farmers' Union