

International Agency for Research on Cancer



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CPW/mg

18 August 2015

Dear Mr Minigh,

As Director of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the specialized cancer agency of the World Health Organization (WHO), I have been asked by Dr Margaret Chan, Director General of WHO, to reply to your letter of 30 July 2015 to which I was copied.

The IARC Monographs evaluate the carcinogenicity of a given agent in a hazard identification process. This classification is the result of a year-long evaluation by leading independent experts without conflicts of interest, who review all pertinent, publicly available scientific literature on carcinogenicity. Given the particular interest in the glyphosate evaluation, IARC accelerated the production of the full Monograph on glyphosate which is now final and available on our website (www.iarc.fr).

Classification of an agent as a carcinogenic hazard is an important indication that exposure could result in an increased risk of cancer. The consideration of epidemiological data, in particular, provides evidence of carcinogenicity at the levels of exposure actually experienced in human populations. In this respect the Monograph provides significant new data: for example, only a few of the more than 20 epidemiological studies reviewed in the IARC evaluation of glyphosate were included in the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) risk assessment from 2004.

The proven reliability of IARC Monographs evaluations over more than four decades is one reason they are used by national or international bodies as a basis to conduct risk assessments and to take regulatory decisions. The IARC Monographs programme itself does not perform a risk assessment; as acknowledged in your letter dated 10 June 2015, the new Questions & Answers document on the Monographs website is helpful in distinguishing these processes (<http://monographs.iarc.fr>).

An Expert Task Force on diazinon, glyphosate and malathion has been established by WHO to determine whether there is a need to update the JMPR assessments of these three compounds following the IARC Monographs evaluations. The Agency has been in close dialogue with WHO throughout, including in relation to communications regarding these complementary processes and their implications.

I thank you again for your interest in the work of the Agency.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CP Wild', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Christopher P. Wild, PhD
Director

cc: Mr William Surman, Communications Manager, CropLife, Brussels (will.surman@croplife.org)
Dr Margaret Chan, Director General, WHO, Geneva (chanm@who.int)
Dr Ian Smith, Executive Director, WHO, Geneva (smithi@who.int)
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