

Thai farmers urge Government to protect their livelihoods



Thai farmers and agricultural industry leaders are urging the government to not restrict the use of glyphosate, a vital crop protection tool that improves the sustainability and productivity of farming. For more than 40 years, glyphosate has helped local farmers improve Thailand's food security, economic development and sustainability of its food production. When it comes to safety assessments, no other pesticide has been more extensively tested than glyphosate. After four decades of evaluations, no regulatory agency in the world considers glyphosate to be carcinogenic.

The Joint World Health Organization (WHO)/Food & Agricultural Organization (FAO) Meeting on Pesticide Residues concluded that "glyphosate is unlikely to pose a carcinogenic risk to humans from exposure through diet". In fact, in the past two years alone regulatory authorities in the Europe Union, South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States have publicly reaffirmed that glyphosate does not cause cancer.

The European Commission's glyphosate webpage outlines the status of the chemical in Europe and the comprehensive safety assessments undertaken by EU Member States and EU agencies. Farmers and agricultural industry leaders are questioning why the Department of Agriculture and Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives are proposing to restrict their use of such a safe and valuable crop protection tool.

Mr. Sukan Sungwana, a Food Standard Agency Secretariat questioned "If the safe and low toxicity herbicide as glyphosate is restricted or banned, who would be responsible to ensure that farmers are not at risk of counterfeit or low quality glyphosate illegally sold in non-certified shop?". Mr. Sukan added "The proposed restriction is impossible as farmers need to use glyphosate, depending on hand or machine weeding is also economically unrealistic. Furthermore, restriction of use in areas connected to or nearby water sources is out of the question as all farms have or connected to water sources."

Mr. Anek Limsriwilai, Palm Oil farmer in Krabi, one of the largest farm owners in the country said: "Since I have been using glyphosate for so many years I have to say that it is a very useful method to manage the farm. If glyphosate is restricted, we have to use other methods and hire more labor to manage weeds. These will definitely impact on our income and the level of competitiveness. But I do agree with the idea of social responsibility. You have to make sure that the regulations will be based on the scientific fact since I believe that the responsible use of crop protection tools is achieved through education and collaboration, not through restrictions and bans."

Thailand's agricultural sector employs a significant portion of the populace, with approximately 60 per cent of the population cultivating rice on half the country's arable land area. Given glyphosate's numerous benefits, including significant cost and labour reduction, Thai farmers are united in urging the government not to proceed with the proposed restrictions.

Mr. Rath Kumluekiat, Shallot and Mango farmer in Lumpoon said "I am a farmer for my whole life, since the beginning, the use of glyphosate is important for us. We have to do the land preparation before planting shallot each year and that time is just once in a year that we use glyphosate. I think it is good to think about food quality and safety. But a restriction on glyphosate would effectively

turn back the clock on innovation. It will directly affect our farmers and the community's access to safe and affordable food—not to mention undermining Thailand's long-standing history as a major global food producer.”.

A recent independent report released by PG Economics entitled 'The contribution of glyphosate to agriculture in Thailand and implications or restrictions on its use' revealed the economic and environmental impacts of restricting glyphosate use.

The analysis revealed that glyphosate is an important tool to Thailand farmers representing 33 per cent of all herbicides used in the country. Glyphosate is widely used in plantation crops like oil palm, rubber, and tropical fruit for land preparation and in crop weed control. Glyphosate was the most important herbicide in oil palm (79 per cent of all herbicide use) and in rubber (81 per cent). It is also an important herbicide in rice, corn, sugarcane, and cassava. Thai farmers would probably face significant yield losses and a hit to their incomes if glyphosate was removed from their toolkit. A 5 per cent yield loss would result in a drop of 1 million tonnes in food production and a corresponding loss of \$231 million in farmers' annual revenue, with rubber, tropical fruits, and oil palm suffering the heaviest impact. The environmental benefits arising from reduced or conservation tillage, such as less soil erosion, high water retention, and reduced CO2 emissions, that Thai farmers enjoyed so far would be lost. A large portion of farmers currently practicing reduced tillage indicated that they would revert to ploughing if denied access to glyphosate.

Quote Box: In the field crops of corn and rice, where glyphosate is used by some farmers, the main impacts of the restriction are expected to be higher costs of land preparation, poorer levels of weed control, less effective land preparation, and lower yields, extracts from PG Economics report.

Mr. Wattana Keawpuang, shallot and rice farmer in Sridaket, is concerned about labor costs of eliminating the weeds on the farm. “Without access to glyphosate, farmers would need access to labour for additional manual and mechanical weed control practices. This additional labour requirement is substantial and would be difficult to secure.”

One of the major arguments calls attention to the fact that agricultural produce—rice, corn, sugarcane, and cassava, among others—are among the country's top export items and taking away a key tool of production would not only force farmers to resort to heavily labour-intensive alternatives, but would reduce the agricultural sector's overall global competitiveness.

Under the “Thailand 4.0 strategy”, Thailand's government aims for a seven-fold increase in average annual income of farmers within the next 20 years. Achieving this will be impossible without policies that encourage farmers to adopt modern agricultural technology, including proven crop protection tools such as glyphosate. The government's commitment to improving farmer incomes is commendable and can be accomplished through close collaboration with the agricultural sector.

More infor please click : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUx7KuuCiiY>

<https://www.facebook.com/besmarterfarmer/>

Box: Glyphosate safety

European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)- glyphosate is unlikely to pose a carcinogenic hazard to humans.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA)- glyphosate does not pose a cancer risk to humans when used in accordance with the label instructions.

Japanese Food Safety Commission (FSC) - no neurotoxicity, carcinogenicity, reproductive effect, teratogenicity or genotoxicity was observed.

The Joint United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization and World Health Organization Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR)- glyphosate is unlikely to pose a carcinogenic risk to humans from exposure through the diet.

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