

Bayer Announces Withdrawal of RoundUp - Lawsuits Too Costly by Mary Wilson

Bayer (Monsanto) announced that it will withdraw RoundUp (active ingredient glyphosate) from the U.S. market for residential usage beginning in 2023.

While this is hailed as a step in the right direction, it is important to know that this move comes only after significant and costly lawsuits from individuals who have claimed (and been upheld by the Supreme Court) to have been harmed by this noxious weed killer. In fact, Bayer said that “this move is being made exclusively to manage litigation risk and not because of any safety concerns.” And it should be noted that the EPA has continued to uphold the registration of RoundUp despite scientific evidence that shows it to be a probable carcinogen as well being a contaminant in our food supply and waterways

This leaves us with several questions and concerns:

- 1) While RoundUp by name is being withdrawn, Bayer has other products which contain glyphosate, eg. Rodeo. The fate of this product is unclear.
- 2) There is still the issue of inerts in any possible new formulations. As we know, an unnamed inert ingredient in RoundUp has shown to be toxic to bumblebees. Since companies are not required to list inerts by name, we can imagine this “secret” chemical showing up in any new formulations.
- 3) The biggest user of RoundUp is agriculture which will still be allowed to spread it on crops (mostly genetically engineered) like corn, soybeans and cotton.
- 4) Significant risks still exist for farm workers who handle glyphosate and to anyone who eats food that is grown by our chemical-intensive agriculture system.

So, what are the take-home messages from this announcement?

- a) We cannot expect the federal government to protect the safety and health of the public with regard to pesticides. EPA does not take a precautionary or preventative stance, instead waiting for a bad outcome before changing any regulations. We cannot assume that if something is approved, it must be “okay”.
- b) The courts have usually ruled in favor of the public but it is a long and arduous process. Although this route may be indicated, it is unfortunate that we should have to target one noxious chemical after another.
- c) That being said, one effective approach would be to eliminate pre-emption (the government’s right to restrict a town from enforcing more stringent limitations on pesticides) would be a significant tool to have.
- d) The real solution to this problem is moving our communities to organic land management. This is what will sustain the soil (the earth) and provide for long-term healthy ecosystems and associated wildlife populations. Pesticides have failed us. Let’s get off that merry-go-round!