

27 September 2019

Attention:

Ms Thokozile Didiza
South African Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
Dr Zwelini Mkhiz
South African Minister of Health

Dear Ms Thokozile Didiza and Dr Zwelini Mkhiz,

Request for Government of South Africa to ban glyphosate and glyphosate-based herbicides

Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI) is a multi-faith environmental organisation committed to increasing awareness and understanding, and taking action for eco-justice, sustainable living and climate justice. Through our different faiths we are called upon to care for all creation. As such we are against the use of pesticides and herbicides that are harmful to both the environment and human beings, and so call for the ban of glyphosate and glyphosate-based herbicides (GBHs).

We hereby call upon the South African government to:

- Issue immediate bans on all uses of glyphosate and glyphosate-based herbicides, urgently starting with banning the use of glyphosate as a desiccator. This refers to the spraying of the chemical on a wide range of crops, including wheat, barley, oats, canola, flax, peas, lentils, soybeans, dry beans and sugar cane, to fast track the ripening of these crops prior to harvest.¹ This practice constitutes one of the key factors precipitating the entry of glyphosate into our food value chains.
- Issue immediate bans on other active ingredients that are banned in the EU (see the detailed list in the report).
- Take adequate measures to ensure other more toxic chemicals do not replace glyphosate.
- Initiate a shift from chemical, input-intensive weed management and agriculture in general to agroecological farming systems by:
 - supporting farmers to discontinue the use of GBHs and refrain from resorting to dangerous pesticides.
 - putting in place a regulatory and legal framework that supports the emergence of the organic and ecological approaches to farming.

These actions form part of the essential steps that need to be taken to rethink our food systems. Relying on pesticide is a choice, and the choice must be made to move away

¹ EcoWatch. Why is glyphosate sprayed on crops right before harvest? 5 March 2016.
<http://www.ecowatch.com/why-is-glyphosate-sprayed-on-crops-right-before-harvest-1882187755.html>.

from substances that harm our environment and our people and compromise the wellbeing of future generations and our planet.

Rationale for this call to action

On 16 August 2019, the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), a Pan-African platform representing smallholder farmers, pastoralists, hunter/gatherers, indigenous peoples, citizens and environmentalists from Africa, in collaboration with the African Centre for Biodiversity, released a paper titled *Africa must ban glyphosate now!*,² as part of its continental campaign to have glyphosate and glyphosate-based herbicides (GBHs) banned from our countries.

In this paper, the hotly contested issue of glyphosate use in Africa, from an African perspective, is examined. Compelling arguments are made in regard to why African governments should immediately ban glyphosate and GBHs in their respective countries. This call for a ban on glyphosate and GBHs is rooted in the overwhelming evidence of the chemical's toxicity and the fact that its current ubiquity as a general weed killer may become far more pronounced with the rise in the use of genetically modified (GM) herbicide-tolerant (notably Roundup, Monsanto's brand name for glyphosate) crops, while at the same time being promoted as 'non-toxic'.

The health and environmental risks presented by glyphosate and GBHs causes have been **legally recognised** by three recent court cases in the USA. In the Pilliod v. Monsanto case concluded in May 2019, the jury awarded the plaintiffs US\$2 billion in punitive and compensatory damages. The jury came to a decision based on evidence, not only of the herbicide's carcinogenicity, but also of Monsanto's role in suppressing and discrediting independent findings regarding Roundup toxicity.³ This legal precedent is hugely significant in that it clearly establishes the so-called 'science' that Monsanto has been systematically manufacturing about the alleged safety of Roundup as false. On the African continent the crisis is silent, as the attribution of illness and mortality to pesticides is difficult to establish, given the scarcity of documented cases of acute and chronic poisoning, and significant under-reporting. This is particularly worrying as GBHs (including Roundup) are used extensively in Africa – in agriculture as well as in urban and rural settings – as a broad-spectrum weed killer. It can be argued that cotton-producing countries on the continent rank among the top consumers of glyphosate, as GBHs are widely used in the production of this crop. The continent's main cotton producers are Mali, Burkina Faso and Benin. In West Africa, the Sahelian Pesticide Committee (linked to the Bamako-based Sahelian Institute), registers pesticides for the entire West Africa and a few Central African countries. Among the 434 pesticides registered for use by the committee, 54 are glyphosate based. These are mostly manufactured in China and sold under various alluring brands, such as 'Piranha', 'La machette' (meaning 'machete'), or 'Rafale.'

In sub-Saharan Africa, about 55% of the workforce is employed in agriculture. This illustrates how much more of a public concern this issue of exposure is for Africa, compared to industrialised countries (for instance, this share is 4% in the European Union

² <https://acbio.org.za/en/africa-must-ban-glyphosate-now>

³ Gillam, C. 2019. Monsanto ordered to pay \$2 Billion to Cancer Victims. Published on the Us Right to Know Monsanto Roundup Trial tracker on 13 May 2019. Available from: <https://usrtk.org>

and 1% in North America).⁴ In the African context, applicators are more often than not farm labourers or contractors. In these contexts, personal protective equipment is often inadequate or not used at all. Pesticides are mostly applied with hand-held appliances connected to backpacks, resulting in high dermal exposure. As **the skin is the main channel through which pesticides penetrate the body, the health risk is therefore significantly higher**. Risks of exposure are many, including leaky backpacks, hoses or valves, windy conditions, or applying the pesticide barefoot.⁵ Given the conditions of use, often with inadequate protective equipment or no protection at all, it is clear that our farmers and farm workers are at grave risk of life-threatening diseases. The food systems in African countries may be as critically contaminated by GBH residues as in the USA or Europe.

Approvals based on out-dated information

Current approvals of glyphosate and GBHs rest on hopelessly out-dated information, often supplied by the agrochemical industry itself. Also, the 'adjuvants' (other chemical additives) used in the formulation of Roundup make it even more toxic than glyphosate alone, a fact largely unknown by the public and decision-makers.

The World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) announced in 2015 that, '*both pure glyphosate and glyphosate formulations are probably carcinogenic to humans.*'

Since the IARC's findings, many additional studies have demonstrated overwhelming evidence of genotoxic effects and oncogenic potential of glyphosate and GBHs. There is compelling evidence from laboratory research and epidemiological studies that exposure to glyphosate or GBHs causes autism,^{6,7,8} cancer,⁹ teratogenic effects (birth defects),¹⁰ reproductive toxicity (infertility),¹¹ and liver disease.¹² Beyond a ban on glyphosate, African

⁴World Bank. 2018. *Employment in agriculture*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS>

⁵Ngowi, V. 2019. Presentation made during the pesticides politics in Africa. 2019. Conference held in Arusha, May 2019. <http://iris.ehess.fr/index.php?4187>

⁶Beecham, J. & Seneff, S. 2016. Is there a link between autism and glyphosate formulated herbicides? *Journal of Autism*. Volume 3, Article 1. <http://www.hoajonline.com/journals/pdf/2054-992X-3-1.pdf>

⁷Swanson, N.L., Leu, A., Abrahamson, J. & Wallet, B. 2014. Genetically engineered crops, glyphosate and the deterioration of health in the United States of America. *Journal of Organic Systems*. 9(2). <http://www.gmofreepartners.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Swanson.pdf>

⁸ An American study found a compelling correlation in the escalating number of children with autism and the volume of glyphosate on corn and soy crops in the USA between 1990 and 2010 (see reference 63).

⁹Williams, G.M., et al. 2016. A review of the carcinogenic potential of glyphosate by four independent expert panels and comparison to the IARC assessment. *Crit Rev Toxicol* 46:3–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10408444.2016.1214677>

¹⁰ Antoniou, M., Habib, M.E.M., Howard, C.V., Jennings, R.C., Leifert, C., Nodari, R.O., Robinson, C.J., Fagan, J. 2012. Teratogenic effects of glyphosate-based herbicides: Divergence of regulatory decisions from scientific evidence. *Journal of Environmental and Analytical Toxicology* S4:006. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/8e51/fcf27a85f70653366a6e45c5798c32ba349b.pdf?_ga=2.265619849.726383174.1563883908-1804739333.1563883908

¹¹ Owagboriaye, F., Dedeke, G.A., Olutoyin, A., Olujimi, O., Ashidi, J.S., Aladesida A. Reproductive toxicity of Roundup herbicide exposure in male albino rat, *Experimental and Toxicologic Pathology*, 69(7): 461–468. ISSN 0940-2993, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.etp.2017.04.007>.

¹² Mesnage, R., Renney, G., Seralini, G.E., Ward, M., Antoniou, M.N. 2017. Multiomics reveal non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in rats following chronic exposure to an ultra- low dose of Roundup herbicide. *Sci. Rep.* 7, 39328. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28067231>

decision-makers must address the risks posed by the inevitable increase in the use of other pesticides (at times equally or more toxic than glyphosate) that are likely to flood markets as substitutes to glyphosate and GBHs, especially as industrialised countries incrementally ban these substances in their countries.

Bans and restrictions around the world

We have seen a marked increase in countries putting in **place either full bans or partial bans** on the use of glyphosate and GBHs. In July 2019, Austria became the first European country to fully ban glyphosate.¹³ Germany has just agreed to a similar ban. But many countries, especially in the Global South, had already made this move. Nationwide bans are in place in Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Sri Lanka (with a partial lift for specific crops), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Vietnam. Subnational bans are also in place in many counties, where federal states (Punjab and Kerala in India) or municipalities (Brussels and many English and Spanish towns) have banned the use of glyphosate. The private use of GBHs has been banned in the Netherlands (2015), Sweden (2017), Belgium (October 2018) and France (2019), and restricted use is also in place in many countries. African leaders will hear warnings that if they ban glyphosate their food security will be threatened, as there is no viable alternative to replace it. Nothing can be further from the truth. In reality there are sustainable alternatives that bring in their wake genuine food sovereignty and lessen the burden of non-communicable diseases, which are skyrocketing on our continent.¹⁴

We urge you to fulfil your duty to protect the citizens of this nation by taking immediate action to ban glyphosate and related toxins.

Sincerely,



Francesca de Gasparis
Executive Director, SAFCEI

Organisations in Africa that have signed on to this campaign:

1. ADAPT, Madagascar, Bali Andriantseheno
2. Africa Centre for Holistic Management, Zimbabwe, Elias Ncube
3. Africa Group of Sweden – Afrikagrupperna
4. Africa Organics, Tanzania, Arthur Heywood
5. African Biodiversity Network (ABN)
6. African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB)
7. Afrikaburn, South Africa
8. Agri-feco sarl, Togo, Tchalma Asséhana
9. Agrostar, Bénin, Orou Méré Houdou,

¹³ Reuters. 2019. Austrian parliament backs EU's first total ban of weedkiller glyphosate. Published on 2 July 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-austria-glyphosate/austrian-parliament-backs-eus-first-total-ban-of-weedkiller-glyphosate-idUSKCN1TX1JR>

¹⁴ There are a plethora of documented alternatives to the agrochemical pathway. In Africa, the Alliance for Food Security in Africa (AFSA) and Groundswell International have generated a wealth of resources documenting how to embark on the agroecological pathway. For resources and case studies of this agroecological transition, refer to <https://www.agroecology-pool.org/showcases/>

10. Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), Nigeria, Mariann Bassey-Orovwuje
11. AREJ/CINKASSE, TOGO, Tchinelieue Koagnale
12. ASPSP-COASP, Sénégal, Alihou Ndiaye
13. Association le Baobab, Burkina Faso, Savadogo Ibrahimia
14. Association Ouest Africaine pour le Développement de la Pêche Artisanale (ADEPA)
15. Association Yelemani pour la promotion de la souveraineté alimentaire, Burkina Faso, Blandine Sankara
16. Autre Terre, Burkina Faso, Legay Christian
17. AVAPAS, Burkina Faso, Korogo B. Emmanuel
18. Batonga Foundation, Zambia, Jack Bbabbi
19. BCS, Mali, Ousmane Samake
20. Biodiversity and Biosafety Association of Kenya, Anne Maina
21. Biodiversity and Biosafety Coalition of Kenya (BIBA)
22. BIOPROTECT, Burkina Faso, Arsène Savadogo
23. Biowatch SA, South Africa
24. Carbone Guinée, Guinée, Ibrahimia Sory Sylla
25. Caritas Zambia
26. Center for Food and Adequate Living Rights (CEFROHT), Uganda, Janet Nyapendi
27. Center for Food and Adequate Living Rights (CEFROHT), Uganda, Kabanda David
28. Central Archdiocesan Province Caritas Association (CAPCA), Uganda, Allan Ssebulime
29. Centre Régional de Formation, de Recherche et de Plaidoyer en Santé de la Reproduction (CEFOREP), Sénégal, Thierno DIENGI
30. CEVASTE, Benin, Mere Jah
31. CNABio, Burkina Faso, Koudougou Rosine
32. Coalition pour la Protection du Patrimoine Génétique Africaine (COPAGEN)
33. Comité Ouest Africain de Semences Paysannes (COASP)
34. Commons for EcoJustice, Malawi, Bright Thamie Phiri
35. Community Alliance for Global Justice (CAGJ)
36. Comparing and Supporting Endogenous Development (COMPAS Africa)
37. CONAPAAC, Cameroon, Atangana Gilbert
38. Copac, South Africa, .Jane Cherry
39. CREDI NGO, Benin, Edner Zohounmegan
40. Eastern and Southern Africa Pastoralist Network (ESAPN)
41. Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF)
42. ENSA, Senegal, Karim Toure
43. Espace Vie et Action-togo (EVA-T), Togo, Aboudou Djamiou
44. Ethiopian Society for Consumer Protection, Ethiopia, Gebremedhin Birega
45. Faith & Justice Network of the Mano River Basin (FJN)
46. Farm-Saved Seeds Network (FASSNET)
47. FASAM Alfarey Ma Zaada, Niger, Djibo Almoustapha
48. Fédération Agroécologique du Bénin (FAEB)
49. Fédération Nationale pour l'Agriculture Biologique (FENAB), Sénégal, Maa Samba Dieng
50. Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA)
51. Food Matters Zimbabwe
52. Food Sovereignty Ghana, Ali-Masmadi Jehu-Appiah
53. Friends of the Earth Africa (FoEA)
54. Galken Permaculture, Kenya, Hosea Kandagor
55. Global Justice Now!
56. GMWatch, United Kingdom
57. GRAIN, Spain
58. Green Living Movement, Zambia, Emmanuel Mutamba
59. Groundswell West Africa (GWA)
60. Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF)
61. Hikone Mocambique - Associcao para o Empoderamento, Olga Muthambe
62. Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC)
63. Institut Africain pour le Développement Economique et Social (INADES-Formation)
64. Institut PanAfricain pour la Citoyenneté, les Consommateurs et le Développement (CICODEV Africa)

65. Institute for Sustainable Development, Ethiopi, Ghebremedhin Belay
66. International Tree Foundation
67. Izindaba Zokudla Community, South Africa, Thalita
68. JA!Justiça Ambiental, JA!FOE Moçambique – Anabela Lemos
69. Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre, Zambia, Bridget O'Connor
70. Kenyan Peasants League, Kenya, David Calleb Otieno
71. Kikandwa Environmental Association, Uganda, Kaganga John
72. La Via Campesina Africa (LVC Africa)
73. Les Amis des Arbres, Sénégal, Camara Elhadji Boubacar
74. Maendeleo Endelevu Action Program (MEAP), Kenya, Karangathi Njoroge
75. Maharishi Vedic Organic Agriculture, UK, Bonny Horvath
76. Media for Justice
77. Mouvement Africain pour les Droits Environnementaux dans la région de l'est du Burkina Faso (MADEE), Fada N'Gourma, Nakande Alassane
78. MUHAS, TANZANIA, Eliud Kasule
79. Ngaatho Community Foundation, Kenya, Gathuru Mburu
80. Nous Sommes la Solution, Sénégal, Mariama Sonko
81. ONG EDEC - Estrutura para o Desenvolvimento da Educação Comunitária, Guiné-Bissau, Justino Caroné Gomes
82. Organic Consumers Alliance (OCA), Kenya, Dr. Peter Mokaya
83. Organisation des Ruraux pour une Agriculture Durable (ORAD), République du Bénin, Métogbé Omer Richard Agoligan
84. Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Association
85. Plate-forme Régionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale (PROPAC)
86. Plateforme de Tenures Foncière, Forestière, Genre et Changement Climatique (TENFOREST-BF), Burkina Faso, Françoise Pioupare
87. PORET, Zimbabwe, Sara Davies
88. Practical Action, Zimbabwe, Kudzai Marovanidze
89. Red de Coordinación en Biodiversidad (Costa Rica)
90. ReSCOPE Programme, Zambia, Mugove Walter Nyika
91. Réseau Africain pour le Droit à l'Alimentation (RAPDA –Togo)
92. Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROPPA)
93. Resources Oriented Development Initiatives (RODI Kenya), Eliud Ngunjiri
94. RESSAN-GB (Rede da Sociedade Civil para a Soberania da Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional da Guiné-Bissau), Celestino Fernando L.
95. Rural Women's Assembly (RWA)
96. Soja Bio Plus, Togo, M'Barma Lambima Tchéléwi
97. SOTOKACC, Burkina Faso, Mariton Ouattara Nathalie
98. South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO), Colleen Anderson
99. Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute (SAFCEI)
100. Sustainable Agriculture Community Development Programme (SACDEP- Kenya), Kenya, Paul K. Karanja
101. TAPOHE, TANZANIA, Dr. Vera Ngowi
102. TCOE, South Africa, Mercia Andrews
103. TERRE A VIE, Burkina Faso, Ali Tapsoba
104. The Biocultural Stewards, Ghana, Adjedi Kwakuduah
105. Thousand Currents
106. Trees for the future, Guinée, Amadou Sidy II Diallo
107. Ubuntu Revival, Ethiopia, Kirubel Tadele
108. Uganda Network on Toxic Free Malaria Control (UNETMAC), Uganda, Ellady Muyambi
109. Umo Isua-Ikoh, Peace Point Development Foundation (PPDF), Nigeria
110. Union Africaine des Consommateurs (UAC)
111. Women on Farms Project
112. World Neighbors
113. Zambia Alliance for Agroecology and Biodiversity, ZAAB, Zambia
114. ZIMSOF, Zimbabwe