

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)
of the Subcommittee on Environment

Committee on Science, Space & Technology
“In Defense of Scientific Integrity: Examining the IARC Monograph Programme and Glyphosate Review”
February 6, 2018

Thank you. Mr. Chairman.

I am glad we are having this hearing today on the chemical review process. Ms. Johnson is correct; for too long industry’s influence on this process has endangered the public’s health and safety. Today, there is an assault on independent scientists and independent scientific organizations by the Trump Administration, particularly the Environmental Protection Agency. It is important we review the methods and tactics that industry has used to influence this Administration and attack independent scientific organizations like the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

This hearing will focus on IARC’s hazard assessment of glyphosate, a key ingredient in Monsanto’s Roundup broad-spectrum herbicide used to kill weeds and grasses. In 2015, IARC determined that glyphosate was “probably carcinogenic to humans.” Other reviews, including a draft human health risk assessment released by the EPA in December concluded that “glyphosate is not likely to be carcinogenic to humans.” Part of that discrepancy may be because these reviews have investigated different issues. IARC conducts *hazard assessments* while EPA conducts *risk assessments*. According to IARC, “A cancer ‘hazard’ is an agent that is capable of causing cancer under some circumstances, while a cancer ‘risk’ is an estimate of the carcinogenic effects expected from exposure to a cancer hazard.”

While there seems to be confusion about these distinct scientific procedures of analysis, and the science on this issue still appears unsettled, the attacks by the chemical industry to discredit individual scientists and scientific organizations such as IARC is not.

Internal Monsanto records show they have ghost written scientific journal articles on glyphosate, attempted to orchestrate a public outcry over IARC’s glyphosate findings, and have targeted specific independent scientists for attack. At a time when most of us are sensitive to the cries of “fake news,” the Monsanto records show in their own words they have sought to “amplify” “positive” messages about glyphosate on social media, “neutralize” the impact of the IARC decision on glyphosate, and to use industry front groups as a “platform for IARC observers and industry spokesperson[s].”

Attempts by industry to mischaracterize the scientific debate appear intended to undercut the scientific evidence regarding the possible dangers of glyphosate and its potential impact on human health. We must make sure any chemical review is not undone by undue corporate influence or misleading scientific studies.

This is all the more important when the chemicals under review are so widely used. Glyphosate has been used as an herbicide in the United States since 1974 and that its use in the U.S. has grown from 11 million pounds in 1987 to nearly 300 million pounds in 2016. Since its introduction in the U.S. 1.8 million tons of glyphosate have been applied across the country and 9.4 million tons of glyphosate has been used on crops around the world.

Recent studies have shown that this wide scale use of glyphosate has had an impact on our food supplies and communities. Glyphosate has been detected in crackers, cookies and cereals, as well as in organic honey and oatmeal.

Chemical exposures, just like exposures to asbestos or lead, or other potentially toxic substances occur regardless of whether you sit to the left or the right of a particular political issue. The public health implications of these exposures are felt by all Americans, and all people. That is exactly why an independent scientific review that is not unfairly or surreptitiously influenced by industry is necessary. We need to come to conclusions regarding the scientific evidence concerning glyphosate's potential impact on human health in a transparent and complete manner.

I look forward to hearing the testimony of our witnesses today, particularly Dr. Jennifer Sass from the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). More than six years ago, Dr. Sass wrote a report titled: "*The Delay Game: How the Chemical Industry Ducks Regulation of the Most Toxic Substances.*" I think it is important that the Committee hear her perspective on these issues.

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I yield back.