

Monsanto is 'outraged' by WHO's cancer assessment

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By Bloomberg

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MONSANTO was "outraged" by the World Health Organisation's (WHO) assessment that its Roundup weedkiller probably caused cancer, it said, the latest defence by the world's biggest seed company of its best-selling product.

In an extended response to Friday's WHO assessment of glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup, Monsanto chief technology officer Robb Fraley said on Monday that the WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), reached its conclusions by "cherry picking" data.

Monsanto's core business is closely tied to Roundup. It's the world's most used herbicide, and most of Monsanto's sales come from crops genetically engineered to survive the weedkiller. Two other WHO programmes had determined that glyphosate was not carcinogenic, and regulators in the US and EU were among those concluding it was not a human health risk, Monsanto said.

"IARC's process is not transparent, its decision is irresponsible and it has the potential to cause confusion about such an important issue as safety," Fraley said.

IARC reached its conclusion as part of a review of five pesticides, including glyphosate, conducted from March 3 to 10. Regulators in the US and EU typically spend years reviewing such data.

Monsanto wrote to WHO director-general Margaret Chan on Friday to "request an urgent meeting" to find ways to "rectify this highly questionable review and conclusion".

"It is our understanding that IARC participants purposefully chose to disregard dozens of studies and publicly available regulatory assessments that support the conclusion that glyphosate does not pose a human health risk," Philip Miller, the Monsanto vice-president for global regulatory affairs, said.

The classification does not affect glyphosate's registration or use, which in the US is the responsibility of the Environmental Protection Agency, which in 2013 found "glyphosate does not pose a cancer risk to humans".
– Bloomberg