

# Administration Sued for Records Detailing U.S. Role on Behalf of Glyphosate-maker Bayer in Pressuring Thailand to Reverse Plan to Ban Pesticide

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*The Center for Biological Diversity sued the administration for public records detailing the U.S. government's efforts on behalf of Bayer, the maker of the herbicide glyphosate, to convince Thailand last year to reverse its planned ban of the cancer-linked chemical.*

The [lawsuit](#) comes after documents previously obtained by the Center revealed evidence that the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. trade officials worked closely with the pesticide and processed-food industries to pressure Thailand into scuttling its ban on glyphosate, which the World Health Organization's cancer-research arm has [listed](#) as a probable carcinogen.

The lawsuit, which was filed on Wednesday, seeks additional documents that administration officials have refused to release regarding their communications with representatives of Bayer and other corporations that stood to benefit from the reversal of the ban.

"It's bad enough that this administration has ignored independent science to blindly support Bayer's self-serving assertions of glyphosate's safety," said Nathan Donley, a senior scientist at the Center. "But to then act as Bayer's agent to pressure other countries to adopt that position is outrageous."

The earlier communications obtained by the Center through a Freedom of Information Act request reveal a coordinated effort between U.S. officials and powerful, multinational corporations to thwart actions abroad that might harm sales of their products.

Bayer and Archer Daniels Midland, a U.S.-based international commodities trader, were two of the companies working with federal officials to pressure Thailand to reverse its plan to ban glyphosate, according to the documents.

In October 2019 Thailand's National Hazardous Substances Committee [voted](#) to ban glyphosate and two other highly controversial pesticides: chlorpyrifos and paraquat. But one month later — five days before the ban was to go into effect — Thailand suddenly reversed its decision on glyphosate.

Records reveal that the U.S. government got involved after Bayer appealed to the administration to intervene on two separate occasions in [September](#) and [October](#) 2019. Both appeals for intervention were forwarded to Ted McKinney, USDA undersecretary for

trade and foreign agricultural affairs, who previously [worked for](#) the pesticide company Dow Agrosciences for nearly 20 years.

Eight days after Bayer's second request, McKinney [sent](#) an official letter to Thailand's prime minister asking the country to reconsider its planned ban.

Concurrent with its efforts at USDA, Bayer was in regular contact with the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the federal agency responsible for recommending U.S. trade policy to the U.S. president.

Documents show that agency collected intelligence on individuals in the Thai government who supported the ban. In discussing the matter with representatives from Bayer, U.S. trade officials [sought information](#) on a supporter of the ban, the Thai deputy agriculture minister:

"...it would be useful to know her personal motivations (i.e., is she a diehard advocate of organic food; and/or staunch environmentalist who eschews all synthetic chemical applications). Knowing what motivates her may help with USG counter arguments."

The U.S. trade office also [asked](#) who in Thailand would be in the best position to influence this decision. Bayer replied, "All efforts should be focused on the Prime Minister."

Representatives of Archer-Daniels-Midland (ADM) also [met](#) with officials at the U.S. trade office in November and [provided](#) the agency with: "...some more intel on the issue, per the questions that were raised during our meeting..."

In [October](#) and [November](#), there were at least two official meetings between ambassadors of the two countries. Memos from both meetings indicated that the glyphosate ban was discussed alongside the impending U.S. decision to revoke Thailand's favorable trade status, allegedly due to worker rights issues. The Thai glyphosate ban and the decision to revoke trade preferences occurred on Oct. 22 and [Oct. 25](#), respectively.

While the official White House media talking points [specifically mention](#) how to respond if asked whether the trade status decision was due to a cause other than workers' rights (i.e. glyphosate), other talking points related to the U.S. response to Thailand's glyphosate ban [specifically omitted](#) discussion of the trade preferences, stating that the U.S. trade office, "does not support inclusion of any mention of [trade preferences] in these talking points."

Two days before Thailand reversed its planned ban on glyphosate, a draft letter to Thailand was [sent](#) to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue for his approval. The content of that letter has not been revealed.

Included in the Center's lawsuit against USDA is a demand for the final draft of that letter.

Read the full USDA FOIA production [here](#)

Read the full USTR FOIA production [here](#)

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