

## New Study Shows Glyphosate Contaminated Soils Put Half of Europe at Risk

"Agribusiness giants have always interfered in the decisions of governments and international regulatory agencies in order to increase their profits from the agrichemicals market, as well as to keep their control on the food market."

By [Ruchi Shroff](#)

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Feature image: A farmer [plows](#) a field in Gragnague, Midi-Pyrenees, France. (Photo: Lelou/cc/flickr)

*Pesticides, once used, do not dissolve into thin air, but persist in the environment, contaminating soil, air and water. This is the most recent red flag to emerge as a result of a [new joint study](#) by the University of Wageningen, the Joint Research Center of the European Commission and RIKILT laboratories – recently published in the scientific journal “Science of the Total Environment” – which shows that almost half of European soils are contaminated. Results of the analysis of 300 soil samples in 10 different European countries reveal that 45% of agricultural land in Europe contains glyphosate and its metabolite AMPA. This is just the latest, and certainly not the last blow to the theories on the presumed, and never proven safety of agrochemicals in agriculture.*

The study represents a milestone in the heated debate on the safety of agrochemicals, considering the inadequacy of the investigations conducted so far on pesticide environmental contamination, as confirmed by [Prof. Violette Geissen](#), of Wageningen University:

“Glyphosate and AMPA are highly persistent once they are attached to soil particles. This increases the risk of environmental contamination through factors such as wind erosion, rainfall or watercourses”.

This study adds to the already numerous proof of the dangers of glyphosate-based pesticides and of the [superficiality](#) with which the institutions responsible for citizens’ safety have worked so far. Faced with such results, It is clear that more research is needed before pesticides are approved, regulated and distributed.

In recent weeks numerous discussions have taken place in Brussels on the issues related to glyphosate’s licence renewal, for which a vote of the EU member states is scheduled in Strasbourg on 23-26 October. On October 19th the European Parliament’s Environmental Committee [backed a motion for the full phase out glyphosate by 2020](#) and to issue immediate restrictions on its use.

This follows the ENVI / AGRI committees discussion, which was held on October 11th, on the so-called [Monsanto Papers](#), where the most prominent European and international

regulatory agencies (EFSA, IARC) were present, along with several independent scientists and journalists. The [debate](#) shed even more light on the actual concerns about loopholes, conflicts of interest, corporate interference and pressure, which have characterised the risk assessment analysis that led to the 18 months exemption of glyphosate authorisation in Europe at the end of 2016.

The recent reports, “[Poisons in Our Plate](#)” and [The Toxic Story of Round Up](#)”, denounce how agribusiness giants have always interfered in the decisions of governments and international regulatory agencies through actions of lobbying, corruption and suppression of independent science, in order to increase their profits from the agrichemicals market, as well as to keep their control on the food market. This new data on soil contamination adds to a growing number of [studies and investigations that demonstrate the extreme danger of pesticides on health and the environment](#).

This new evidence gives still further weight to our request that the European Union does not renew the authorization of the use of glyphosate and seriously reconsider its agricultural policies, giving priority to the rights of citizens to health and safety.

*[Ruchi Shroff](#) is the director of [Navdanya International](#). Her studies are based on physics, economics, on indigenous population rights and land grabbing. She is the coordinator of the Seed Freedom campaign, a global network reclaiming the rights of farmers to save and exchange traditional seeds. She is part of the organizing committee of Monsanto Tribunal and People’s Assembly.*

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