

The following article, prepared by Bruce Knight, was the lead feature in Crop Protection Monthly in November 2017

## GLYPHOSATE RE-REGISTERED BY EU FOR FIVE YEARS

With just days to go before the temporary EU registration of glyphosate was due to expire member states voted at a specially called appeal committee in favour of glyphosate re-registration for a period of five years. This followed a failure to reach a decision in a meeting called during early November and after protracted debate and acrimony in the European Parliament and wider forums (*October CPM*). The final decision to proceed with a five year registration came about as Germany voted in favour having always abstained in previous meetings. Under EU rules a qualified majority is when a proposal wins approval (or rejection) from 55% of the EU countries, representing at least 65% of the population. Germany represents 16.06% of the population consequently its vote swung the decision with the qualified vote reaching 65.71%.

The European Commission declared the result to be a 'positive opinion.' It was reported that 18 countries had backed the proposal to renew the license and these were - UK, Bulgaria, Germany, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden. Nine voted against - Belgium, Greece, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta and Austria. Portugal abstained. It was also reported that France argued strongly for the extension to be limited to three years.

After the vote the EU Health and Food Safety commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis was reported to have tweeted: "Today's vote shows that when we all want to, we are able to share and accept our collective responsibility in decision making." The decision has created political ramifications in a number of member states.

After the vote the French President Emmanuel Macron was reported to have asked his government to look for alternative pesticides and to ban glyphosate in France within three years. Potentially the most politically significant outcome could be in Germany. The German agriculture minister Christian Schmidt voted in favour of the proposal at a time when Chancellor Angela Merkel is struggling to form a coalition government. Herr Schmidt is a member of the Christian Social Union (CSU) party, a sister group of Merkel's Christian Democratic (CDU) party. However the voting decision has alienated the SPD (Social Democratic Party), potentially partners in a coalition. It was reported that Angela Merkel said of Herr Schmidt's voting decision: "That was not in accordance with the instructions that the government had worked out." Her statement came after a number of senior SPD leaders said Herr Schmidt's action had undermined their confidence in the conservatives as partners. He defended his decision, saying that the extension would have come about anyway and that he was able to win important restrictions on the herbicide's use in return for a yes vote. Specific stipulations listed in the EU registration document are that member states shall pay particular attention to:

- the protection of the groundwater in vulnerable areas, in particular with respect to non-crop uses;
- the protection of operators and amateur users;
- the risk to terrestrial vertebrates and non-target terrestrial plants;
- the risk to diversity and abundance of non-target terrestrial arthropods and vertebrates via trophic interactions;
- compliance of pre-harvest uses with good agricultural practices.

It is also required that any products containing glyphosate do not contain the co-formulant POEallowamine.

A number of objections to the decision were raised by green lobby groups. Bart Staes, a Belgian Green member of the European Parliament, said that there are credible concerns regarding the safety of glyphosate, and that the EU/EC should find 'sustainable alternatives'. The UK's Green MEP Molly Scott Cato, a member of the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee, described the renewal as a 'toxic decision.' Secretary general of the European farming group, Copa and Cogeca, Pekka Pesonen, said: "It should have been re-authorised for 15 years after it was given a positive assessment by both the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). It is vital to feed a growing population with reliable food supplies at affordable prices." The registration will now run from 16 December 2017 until December 2022.