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AFRICANS REFUSE TO BE CHEMICAL DUMPING GROUND

Civil society organisations and citizens across Africa are calling upon their governments to issue an immediate ban on all use of glyphosate and glyphosate-based herbicides (GBHs).

Launched by the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) and the African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) the #BanGlyphosateAfrica campaign has been endorsed by African organisations representing millions of African citizens. Governments across the continent are being inundated with messages, letters and petitions demanding that they protect their citizens with an immediate ban.

Globally, glyphosate and GBHs have contaminated all spheres of our environment and food systems, kicking off one of the world's biggest health crises. Chronic diseases have increased in tandem with GBH use, as recent court cases in the USA have shown.

AFSA Coordinator Dr Million Belay explains: "Countries around the world are rushing to put bans in place, yet African governments are silent. This is terrifying, as Roundup is used extensively by African farmers and farm workers as a weed killer, and residues can be found in the food we eat."

The World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) announced in 2015 that '*both pure glyphosate and glyphosate formulations are probably carcinogenic to humans*'. Independent research shows that glyphosate and GBHs can cause many chronic illnesses, and damage cellular DNA – leading to cancer. This evidence can no longer be ignored by our African leaders. Direct and indirect exposure places African farmers, consumers and workers at extreme risk of disease. Sample testing of mothers' breast milk has revealed the presence of GBHs.

Despite the global wave of GBH bans, global production capacity has increased to twice that of demand (partially due to China's massive output). This makes Africa even more attractive as a market, which fuels the push to increase the use of GBHs and glyphosate-tolerant genetically modified (GM) crops.

It is documented that 38 weeds are resistant to glyphosate, which will only result in more glyphosate being used. This contradicts the claim that converting to herbicide-tolerant GM crops reduces the quantity of herbicide needed.

ACB director Mariam Mayet says: "Without a ban, manufacturers will keep dumping these toxic chemicals in African countries, where they are still permitted. Africa doesn't need these deadly poisons to deal with weeds; there are many viable alternatives that avoid the risk of disease and damage caused by GBHs."

The myth that pesticides are needed to feed the world has been refuted. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Hilal Elver, has emphasised that "without or with minimal use of toxic chemicals, it is possible to produce healthier, nutrient-rich food, with higher yields in the longer term, without polluting and exhausting environmental resources".ⁱ

African countries can avoid the 'agro-chemical lock in' by promoting agroecological and other non-chemical farming alternatives in agriculture, and adopting alternative weed control agents for urban areas.

The continental campaign thus calls on African governments to:

- issue an immediate ban on all use of glyphosate and GBHs;
- take adequate measures to ensure other more toxic chemicals do not replace glyphosate; and
- initiate a shift from chemical, input-intensive agriculture to agroecological farming systems.

A full evidence based report on glyphosate toxicity and the urgent need for a ban is available online in English, French and Portuguese here:

<https://acbio.org.za/acbio/web/en/africa-must-ban-glyphosate-now>

In a related campaign in South Africa, on August 28, Women on Farms Project (WFP) marched to Parliament calling for a ban of 67 pesticides that have been found to be hazardous and thus banned in Europe, including Roundup.

WFP has given the government until Monday, 30 September to respond to the call for a ban. In the interim, they are also calling for the enforcement of regulations regarding pesticide use. Warnings should be issued before a pesticide is used and farm workers need to be provided with protective clothing when working in fields, after pesticide use or close to where pesticide is being applied. This campaign is supported by Oxfam Germany, with close on 30,000 of their supporters endorsing the call for a ban.

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Notes for Editors

AFSA is a broad alliance of civil society actors who are part of the struggle for food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa. It is a network of networks, currently with 35 members active in more than 50 African countries. These include African food producer networks, African NGO networks, indigenous people's organizations, faith based organizations, women and youth groups, and consumer movements. www.afsafrica.org

African Centre for Biodiversity

The ACB is a research and advocacy organisation working towards food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa, with a focus on biosafety, seed systems and agricultural biodiversity. The organisation is committed to dismantling inequalities and resisting corporate-industrial expansion in Africa's food and agriculture systems. Our current geographical focus is Southern and East Africa, working in extensive continental and global networks. www.acbio.org.za

ⁱ United Nations Human Rights Council. 2017. Thirty-fourth session. 27 February–24 March 2017 Agenda item 3. *Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/report-special-rapporteur-right-food-ahrc3448>