



## New Coalition Will Support Industry Attack on IARC

### IARC, OEHHA, PROPOSITION 65

By ROGER PEARSON, March 4, 2018

A group of industry and business interests has launched a new coalition seeking to "reform" the process utilized by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in its Monograph program. The announcement of the new coalition, although not specifically referring to glyphosate, follows an extraordinary exchange of accusations between IARC officials and Republican members of Congress over what the latter feel were flaws in the development of **IARC's Monograph classifying glyphosate<sup>1)</sup>** as a probable human carcinogen.

The formation of the new coalition, the **Campaign for Accuracy in Public Health Research<sup>2)</sup>** (CAPHR) Coalition, was announced on January 25, about a year after the American Chemistry Council (ACC) announced the formation of the CAPHR itself. The CAPHR Coalition is made up of ACC, the American Petroleum Institute, the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada, CropLife America, National Association of Manufacturers, the Society of Chemical Manufacturers and Affiliates, and the United States Council for International Business. The Coalition promises to "modernize" the Monographs Program through greater transparency and "balanced assessments that produce credible conclusions."

Much of the impetus for this industry effort goes back to the 2015 decision by IARC to publish a Monograph concluding that glyphosate is a probable human carcinogen. Glyphosate is an active ingredient in a number of pesticides, most notably in Monsanto's Roundup, which is the world's most widely used pesticide. The IARC conclusion formed the basis for the decision by OEHHA last July to list glyphosate as a carcinogen under California's Proposition 65. Monsanto is challenging that listing in ongoing cases in both state and federal courts [see **Monsanto and Farm Groups Sue to Overturn Glyphosate Listing<sup>3)</sup>**, December 21, 2017].

Monsanto and its industry allies have strongly criticized the IARC Monograph glyphosate finding as out-of-step with the conclusions reached by government agencies throughout the world, who have generally found glyphosate to be non-carcinogenic. As part of their critique of the IARC decision they point to what they feel were a number of irregularities in IARC's decision making. The industry attacks were echoed in letters sent to IARC by Republican members of the U.S. House's Science, Space, and Technology Committee, headed by Texas Republican Lamar Smith. The **letters, sent on November 1<sup>4)</sup>** with a **follow up on December 8<sup>5)</sup>**, accused IARC of a lack of transparency in its glyphosate deliberations, of ignoring relevant studies that reached a different conclusion, and of relying on an individual named Christopher Portier, who is allegedly assisting plaintiffs' lawyers in lawsuits alleging that exposure to Roundup caused cancer in their clients.

IARC's Director, Christopher Wild, **responded to these accusations in a November 20 letter<sup>6)</sup>** and

in greater detail in a **January 2018 memorandum**<sup>7)</sup> . On the lack of transparency charges, Wild notes that "draft and deliberative materials are not made public, in order to protect the Working Group scientists from interference by vested interests." Wild does note, however, that the draft documents are available to all scientists attending Monograph meetings including, in this case, an observer from Monsanto, who attended the meeting on glyphosate.

Dr. Wild rebuts the argument about not considering all relevant studies by pointing out that IARC Monographs are based on independent scientific review of published research and not on "unpublished" or "secret data" unavailable publicly. The data that IARC was accused of ignoring was unpublished information generated by the Agricultural Health Study (AHS). Wild also responds to the allegation regarding Dr. Portier by pointing out he was "an Invited Specialist" who did not participate in the evaluations in the Monograph and that at the time he worked with IARC did not have any "contractual relationships with litigation lawyers..."

In addition to his specific responses to the letters from Congress, Dr. Wild's **January 2018 memorandum**<sup>8)</sup> opens with a blistering attack on IARC's critics.

"Since the evaluation of glyphosate by the IARC Monographs Program in March 2015, the Agency has been subject to unprecedented, coordinated efforts to undermine the evaluation, the program and the organization. These efforts have deliberately and repeatedly misrepresented the Agency's work. The attacks have largely originated from the agro-chemical industry and associated media outlets."

#### Recommended Changes by CAPHR Coalition

The new coalition, for its part, emphasizes decisions on substances other than glyphosate by IARC that support its claim that the organization needs reform. It cites decisions by IARC related to coffee, cell phones, and red meat as also inconsistent with good science. The coalition has released several "principals of reform" for which it will be advocating.

- Consider a Substances' Risk Not Just Hazard. This would address a long-standing complaint of the regulated community that relying only on a "hazard" identification without considering dose and exposure makes a decision that a particular ingredient is a carcinogen misleading to the public.
- Require Reliance on Weight of Evidence. The Coalition argues that current IARC procedures rely on a "limited view of the scientific evidence" which limits the types of studies that are considered.
- Establish Standard Criteria for Selecting Studies.
- Increase Transparency and Utilize Input from Stakeholders. The Coalition believes that IARC should describe how it considers stakeholder input and give stakeholders an opportunity to comment on a draft Monograph.
- Explain Conflicts of Interest. The Coalition argues that IARC should disclose all conflicts among its advisers and members, including those from academia and the NGO community, and not just those involving industry.
- Improve Monograph Releases. IARC should release all Monograph information at one time and do away with its current practice of releasing short summaries of its findings, months before it

releases the supporting data.

## **Resources for this article**

**1. IARC's Monograph classifying glyphosate**

<http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Monographs/vol112/index.php>

**2. Campaign for Accuracy in Public Health Research**

<http://campaignforaccuracyinpublichealthresearch.com/>

**3. Monsanto and Farm Groups Sue to Overturn Glyphosate Listing**

<https://prop65clearinghouse.com/articles/13282>

**4. letters, sent on November 1**

<https://prop65clearinghouse.com/documents/25868>

**5. follow up on December 8**

<https://prop65clearinghouse.com/documents/25869>

**6. responded to these accusations in a November 20 letter**

<https://prop65clearinghouse.com/documents/25870>

**7. January 2018 memorandum**

<https://prop65clearinghouse.com/documents/25871>