

# Crops being drenched with cancer-causing glyphosate immediately before harvest



Vast quantities of non-organic crops are deliberately doused with the carcinogenic herbicide glyphosate (trade name Roundup) in order to provide farmers with a more profitable harvest.

Roundup is one of the world's most popular herbicides, and the most widely used agricultural and residential weedkiller in the United States. The adoption of crops genetically engineered to resist Roundup has led to an explosion in its use in the past 20 years.

In March, the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) announced in an article published in the journal *Lancet Oncology* that it had updated glyphosate's status to "probably carcinogenic," based on strong evidence from animal studies and "limited evidence" from human studies.

## **Crops deliberately poisoned, then harvested**

The practice of killing good crops with Roundup right before harvest is described in a 2010 paper by Roundup manufacturer Monsanto. The purpose, the company says, is to cause the crops to all die at the same time, thus drying uniformly and providing an earlier and more profitable harvest.

"Uneven maturity and green tissue delays harvest," the paper reads, directing the reader's attention to photographs showing the "uniform" and "complete" desiccation of fields of corn and sunflowers killed by Roundup.

Killing crops in this way leads to lower drying times and costs, the company says. It also

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saves farmers the trouble of having to wait for crops to fully mature before harvesting them.

"By bringing harvest date forward 2-3 weeks growers can more often meet the optimum planting date for winter wheat establishment so maximising yield," the paper reads.

Strictly speaking, this practice consists of using [Roundup](#) as a desiccant, rather than an herbicide (although the plants are still killed in the process).

"Desiccants (or harvest management tools) are used worldwide by growers who are producing [crops](#) that require 'drying down' to create uniformity of plant material at harvest," says the Manitoba Pulse Growers Association. "These products may also assist in pre-harvest weed control. In Canada, products such as diquat (Reglone) and [glyphosate](#) (Roundup) have been used as desiccants in pulse crops."

Notably, desiccant use of Roundup is "off-label," as Canada has only approved Reglone for this use.

Monsanto also encourages farmers to spray their fields with Roundup just before harvest for weed-control purposes.

"Preharvest is the best time for controlling Canada thistle, quackgrass, perennial sowthistle, dandelion, toadflax, and milkweed," the company says. "A preharvest weed control application is an excellent management strategy to not only control perennial weeds, but to facilitate harvest management and get a head start on next year's crop."

### **Causes cancer, birth defects, hormone failure**

Because no records are kept, it is impossible to know the scale at which food crops are being sprayed with herbicides just days before harvest. Sources suggest that the practice is relatively widespread among certain crops, however, such as sugarcane grown in the southeastern United States.

The practice of spraying right before harvest has raised alarm with consumer advocates who fear that such use leaves less time for residues to dissipate before the [crop](#) reaches consumers. At the very least, the use of Roundup as a desiccant means that even non-"Roundup Ready" crops may contain exceptionally high Roundup residues, resulting from being sprayed directly with the chemical.

Evidence continues to mount of the dangers posed by Roundup exposure. In addition to [cancer](#), studies have linked both Roundup and specifically glyphosate to organ failure and birth defects. A recent study conducted by scientists from Flinders University in

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Australia found that Roundup disrupts the endocrine (hormonal) system at levels allowed in drinking water. That study also found that Roundup was more toxic to the endocrine system than pure glyphosate, suggesting that some of the "inactive" ingredients in the herbicide are also toxic either alone or in combination with glyphosate and other Roundup ingredients.

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