

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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POLICY

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France announces end of glyphosate use by 2021

Report Categories:

Policy and Program Announcements

Agriculture in the News

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

Agriculture Minister Didier Guillaume confirmed that France would eliminate glyphosate use by 2021 with limited exceptions. Additionally he announced that France plans to cut pesticide, insecticide and fungicide usage in half by 2025. He went on to praise organic and biodynamic farming and urged farmers to revert to the farming methods used by their grandparents. French farmers and France's main farm union, FNSEA, reacted negatively with public announcements highlighting the risk for French consumers in terms of safety, quality, and quantity of food.

On April 27, French Agricultural Minister Didier Guillaume announced that France would prohibit glyphosate use starting on January 1, 2021. The Minister added that exceptions could be granted for agricultural production in specific cases where no alternate product was available, but would be limited in scope and duration. He highlighted that France is working on developing other options for farmers.

Minister Guillaume noted that his home region of Drome produces almost half of its wine production organically and/or bio-dynamically. Minister Guillaume stated that all chemicals are problematic and his goal as Minister was to reduce or eliminate the dependence of French agriculture on any active products, not just glyphosate. The Minister advised French farmers to go back to using crop rotation, crop coverage, and basic agronomic methods he said that farmers' grandparents had used and had been forgotten. By January 2021, the French government is mandating a complete separation of those organizations selling products and providing production advice to farmers in order to achieve its goal of cutting pesticide use by half by 2025. When implemented this means that cooperatives could no longer provide technical advice to farmers and sell the product they present as a solution. This mandate will add additional costs and administration for most cooperatives.

The Minister's statement was met with anger by French farmers, FNSEA and many other French farm organizations. They responded on social media noting that reverting to this style of farming could mean production at levels 30 to 40 percent lower than today. They noted that with the global economy France faces seven new insects per year on average that can be controlled safely with limited use of active chemical products. They added that reducing fungicides on grains could lead to widespread infestation by dangerous fungi such as ergot. Many also expressed surprise that Minister Guillaume advocated for biodynamic production. Even in France, this form of production is not widely accepted as a viable large-scale agricultural model and is only supported by a small minority of farmers and organizations.