

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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**Report Name:** French Scientific Report finds banning Glyphosate use harms no-till sustainable agriculture

**Country:** France

**Post:** Paris

**Report Category:** Agricultural Situation, Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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**Report Highlights:**

The French government's agricultural research institute found that banning glyphosate will significantly increase production costs for French farmers practicing no-till and conservation agriculture. On the majority of conventionally tilled land the ban will increase production costs, but the impacts will be less significant. France plans to ban glyphosate by 2022, but farmers hope that this report and others that highlight the negative impacts on agricultural production will encourage the government to reconsider the decision or postpone its implementation.

At the request of the French government, the French Agricultural and Environmental Research Institute (INRAE) analyzed the economic impact of banning glyphosate on arable crops. The result of the analysis was published on June 16, 2020: [INRAE report on the economic impact of alternative to glyphosate for arable crops](#). This report follows a [2017 report](#) assessing the uses and technical alternatives to glyphosate. INRAE also published a July 2019 [a report on the economic impact](#) of alternatives to glyphosate in vine crops and a [report on the economic impact](#) of alternatives to glyphosate on fruit cultivation in December 2019.

France intends to ban glyphosate by 2022, the same year the EU commission must decide on the renewal of the herbicide's approval for use in the European Union. According to a study by the French Ministry of Environment, 9700 MT of glyphosate were sold in 2018, a 25 percent increase from 2008. France banned sales of glyphosate for non-agricultural use in January 2019.

The latest INRAE report sampled more than 17,000 fields in France representing about 90 percent of typical French arable fields for all major crops. The goal was to assess the economic impact of the glyphosate ban on various crops and geographic areas as well as on different types of production methods. The report focused on soil management techniques, such as tilling instead of using glyphosate. It assessed changes in labor and energy costs (such as fuel for tractors), investments in soil working equipment (such as ploughs) as well as increased labor requirements.

*The INRAE report states that there is no chemical alternative to glyphosate. According to the report, the other two approved herbicides, Dicamba and 2.4 D hormone, have profiles that are less favorable to the environment and people than glyphosate. The report also states that they are less effective against certain weeds.*

The use of glyphosate is minimal on 80 percent of the tested fields that are regularly tilled or receive regular superficial soil turning. Doses applied are below two or three liters per hectare, and often on just a limited portion of the fields (8-40 percent). Glyphosate is primarily used prior to working the soil to kill the weeds and make the tilling process easier. Large farms tend to use more glyphosate to reduce their workload and associated costs of soil work, especially tilling. However, agronomists believe full tilling could eliminate such uses of glyphosate. Overall, for those fields that already use limited amounts, the increased costs for labor and fuel would be about €10 per hectare (\$4.4 USD per acre).

About 18 percent of the sampled fields have very diverse conditions, where a ban of glyphosate is difficult to assess. Some have short crop rotations, such as for rapeseed and wheat, which increase the grower's dependency on glyphosate. For those farmers the use of glyphosate is not necessitated by their cultivation method but is used as a tool to reduce labor time. For these farmers INRAE estimates the increased cost generated by a glyphosate ban to €25.6 per hectare (\$11.3 USD per acre).

Direct sowing, or no-till field farming accounts for just less than two percent of farmed land in France, and more than 80 percent of those fields are treated with glyphosate. The no-till method is considered among the most environmentally sound it increases biodiversity, soil fertility and life and aids in carbon sequestration. INRAE scientists reported that banning glyphosate would likely lead farmers employing these methods to abandon

them because of the dramatic increase in production costs. The ban will increase their production costs by up to €80 per hectare (USD 35.2 per acre). For those farms, the gross farm surplus (sales minus production costs) would decline by 16 percent.

French farm organizations will use this INRAE report to urge the French government to postpone the planned ban on glyphosate. They emphasize that lowering French farmers competitiveness on those farms utilizing sustainable methods seems to contradict the post COVID-19 government call to increase French national food sovereignty and promote sustainable agriculture. However, given the government's vocal commitment to enforcing this ban, it may not have an impact on the policy. NGOs opposed to glyphosate have yet to comment on this or other INRAE reports on glyphosate.

**Attachments:**

No Attachments.