

Government should ban trade and use of Harmful Agrochemicals to support Uganda's quest to fight against cancer.

On 4th February 2021, Uganda will join the rest of the World to commemorate the World Cancer Day under a theme "I am and I will: Create a future without cancer". This theme comes at a time when the cancer burden in Uganda is rising in spite of efforts to mitigate against this escalating rise. Statistics from the Uganda Cancer Institute reveal that there are more than 60,000 cases of cancer per year in the country with 22,000 deaths occur in the country due to cancer . It is also estimated that unless measures to mitigate against the spread of cancer are prioritized, by 2024, there will be 80,000 Cancer cases per year, given the fact that the Uganda Cancer Institute receives between 15 and 30 new cancer patients per day .

Amidst this increasing rate, we are concerned that one of the least examined causes of cancer is trade and use of harmful Agrochemicals like glyphosate among farmers. As a predominantly agricultural economy, the need to increase agricultural output for increased trade and food security has always taken center stage in Uganda's policy and practice discourse. However, we wish to note that out of the need to increase Agricultural output, one of the rising practices is the use of agrochemicals in Uganda's agricultural production. One of the widely used herbicides in Agricultural production is Glyphosate, which represents over 75% of the market for herbicides in Uganda.

There is ample evidence that harmful Agrochemicals negatively impact on Uganda's trade competitiveness, food security and increases the disease burden in the country, especially the Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) like cancer. For example, the EU has occasionally slapped bans on Uganda's Agricultural exports due to prevalence of harmful pesticide residues . Furthermore, while there is ample evidence that herbicides like Roundup are linked to a number of cancers, they are still widely used by farmers in Uganda . We wish to reiterate that the World Health Organisation has sounded several alarms over the usage of the herbicide but it remains popular amongst farmers in Uganda. This prevalence is in spite of the fact that a number of countries like Austria, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, and many other countries from banning or imposing partial bans on the use of glyphosate and glyphosate-based herbicides, with France and

Germany embarking on the process of banning the popular weed killer, both announcing plans to stop its use in 2021 and 2023, respectively. As Civil Society Organizations working on Trade, right to food and health related issues, we are concerned by the government of Uganda's failure and omission to ban the use of glyphosate and Glyphosate Based Herbicides (GBHs) which threatens and is a violation of the right to life, health, right to adequate food and to a clean and health environment guaranteed under Objectives XX, XXII, Articles 20, 45, 8A and 33 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. The government's failure and omission to properly regulate and control pesticides use in the agricultural sector, coupled with failure to prevent supply of food contaminated with pesticides residues further threatens and is a violation of economic rights of Ugandans by threatening market access.

Recalling that glyphosate and Glyphosate Based Herbicides (GBHs) are being used in Uganda yet they were classified as highly hazardous and "probably carcinogenic (cause cancer and other diseases to end users)" by the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in 2015;

Concerned that much of the agricultural products and food in markets are contaminated with the harmful pesticides residues, with up to eight harmful pesticide contaminants being found in tomatoes sold in major markets in Kampala and other parts of Uganda;

Further concerned that Uganda's agricultural export are threatened with being banned from major markets for being in violation of the phytosanitary standards and being contaminated with pesticides residues;

Stressing that the government has by law an obligation to enact and formulate laws regulating the manufacture, use, storage, transportation, distribution, trade, importation, exportation and use of pesticides in Uganda;

Further recalling that there are no sufficient regulations governing the use of pesticides in Uganda yet the Agricultural Chemicals (Control) Act places an obligation on the government of Uganda to make regulations enabling the application of the substantive provisions of the Act;

Noting that many farmers in Uganda have no knowledge and training on integrated pest management which puts their health to risk;

Further reiterating that unless measures to mitigate against the spread of cancer are prioritized, by 2024, there will be 80,000 Cancer cases per year in Uganda;

As the world celebrates the World Cancer Day 2021, we wish to reiterate that in this regard, the Government of Uganda has failed to execute its constitutional obligation to protect and promote the right to health of its citizens by regulating trade and use of harmful agrochemicals.

Against this background, in order to mitigate against the worrying cancer related cases, we CSOs working on Trade, right to food and health call upon the Government of Uganda through its relevant Ministries to:

1. Issue an immediate ban on use of glyphosate, and Glyphosate Based Herbicides (GBH) in Uganda and all internationally banned agro-chemicals.
2. Shift from conventional agriculture to agroecology farming
3. Implement both the National Organic Food Policy and section 18 of the Agriculture Chemicals (Control) Act 2007 which provides for regulation of the use, transport, storage advertisement and disposal of pesticides.
4. Introduces use of phytosanitary machines to examine food products before their supply on the market by farmers within a period of two years, or such reasonable time as court may deem fit, of passing the judgment in this case.
5. Adopts use of extension workers to promote integrated pesticide management.

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