

Italy will issue no more waivers on POE-tallowamine pesticides

-- By Simon Marks and Giulia Paravicini

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Italy will not grant any more grace periods to pesticide manufacturers wanting to sell glyphosate-based products containing a banned substance that the EU says can potentially cause cancer.

Italy's health ministry has come under fire from activists for allowing continued sales of glyphosate-based products containing a co-formulant called POE-tallowamine, which was outlawed for use in the EU in August last year. Tallowamine is a type of "surface-acting agent," which helps pesticides stick more easily to weed leaves.

Despite the EU ban, Italy issued a decree dated November 21 allowing manufacturers to continue selling the mixture until as late as May 22. EU law allows for a maximum grace period of 18 months. But no more exemptions will be granted.

"We want to clarify that despite having received further requests [to grant longer grace periods] from stakeholders, we will not issue further derogations to use up stocks, since such derogations would not protect the right to health," Giuseppe Ruocco, director for safety and regulation of plant protection products inside Italy's health ministry, said in a letter to Michela Velardo, a member of the Rome and Brussels Bar who is acting on behalf of Pesticide Action Network Italy and Safe Food Advocacy Europe (SAFE).

According to the Commission, a total of 20 countries in Europe have allowed pesticide manufacturers to continue selling glyphosate-based products containing POE-tallowamine.