EU policies on Plant Protection Products and implications for the railway sector

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Since 2009 the EU has a comprehensive legal framework for achieving a more sustainable use of plant protection products by reducing the risks and impacts of their use on human health and the environment.
Sustainable use of plant protection products (pesticides)

- Protecting plants and plant products against harmful organisms, including weeds
- Improving agriculture production
- 2009 legislative framework is composed of 2 Directives and 2 Regulations
EU Regulatory framework impacting herbicides

- Placing on the market of plant protection products
  - Control of products entering market
- Sustainable use of pesticides
  - Control on distribution and use
- Technical requirements for machinery
- Maximum residue levels of pesticides
- Collection of statistics
- Water Framework Directive
- Groundwater Directive
- Priority Substances Directive
- Drinking Quality Directive
Regulation 1107/2009 marketing plant protection products

- Stricter approval criteria
- Shared responsibility
  - EU level: approval of active substances
  - MS+zonal: products
- Incentives for low-risk, basic substances, minor users
- Proper use: sustainable use and integrated pest management
Directive 2009/128/EC
Sustainable use of pesticides

Reducing risks and impacts of the use of pesticides on human health and on the environment

Promoting the use of integrated pest management and the use of alternative techniques

- Training
- Sales
- Awareness raising
- Equipment
- Aerial spraying
- Aquatic environment
- Protected areas
- Handling, storage, disposal
- IPM

NATIONAL ACTION PLANS
Keys steps in active substance renewal

- Articles 7 to 13 of Regulation (EC) 1107/2009
- Regulation (EU) 1141/2010 and Regulation (EU) 844/2012
- Process normally takes at least 26 months
The approval process

Commission Draft Implementing Act

Standing Committee PAFF

- Positive opinion
- No opinion
- Negative opinion

Draft will be adopted: License renewed

Draft cannot be adopted

Commission Amended Draft Implementing Act

Appeal Committee

- Positive opinion
- No opinion
- Negative opinion

Draft may be adopted: License renewed

Draft cannot be adopted: License expired
Glyphosate renewal

Expiry date: 30 June 2016

- March 2016: proposal to renew until 2031
- May 2016: revised proposal to renew until 2025
- MS will still assess or re-assess the safety of pesticides containing glyphosate sold in their territory

No decision 19 May
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Railway position

Controlled and responsible usage of herbicides in the railway sector under full application of the existing legal framework and control of competent authorities for environmental protection
Herbicides use to keep railway track area plant free

- Ensure stability of the ballast bed;
- Keep free view on signals;
- Prevent fire due to dry weed;
- Ensure ability to inspection;
- Ensure safety at track maintenance;
- Ensure visibility of train drivers;
- Ensure functioning of train detection track circuits
- Guarantee a safe start and brake of trains
Vegetation control methods
no viable alternative to herbicides

- Thermal methods
  - Slow speed
  - Fire risks
  - Carbon-intensive

- Mechanical techniques
  - Slow speed
  - Not efficient

- Manual methods
  - Dangerous operation
A responsible approach to the use of herbicides

- Use herbicides only where they are necessary and aim for minimized use
- Weed control strategies
- Automated weed detection
- Analysis of weed occurrence
- Protect workers and the public
Railway position

- Full prohibition of any kind of usage of herbicides along any kind of railway infrastructure is not feasible
- Uncontrolled weed will lead to
  - Potential railway traffic safety issues
  - Reduction of life expectancy of rail infrastructure
- Call for a controlled and responsible usage of glyphosate in the railway sector
Conclusions

- Glyphosate is widely used in the agricultural sector
- Rail represents less than 0.5% of the EU market of glyphosate
- Railways depend on glyphosate in their weed management
- If there is a ban at the EU level, exemption for the railway sector is required
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