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Mexico does not back down on glyphosate ban despite US pressure

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Mexico, Feb 19 (EFE) .- The Government of Mexico has not shown intention to reverse the gradual ban on the herbicide glyphosate, which is to end in 2024, despite institutional pressure in the United States and constant assertions from the manufacturer, Bayer, that its carcinogenic effects have not been demonstrated.

Internal communications reveal the pressure that both Bayer and the CropLife chemical lobby have exerted towards different agencies of the United States Government to avoid the prohibition in Mexico, information obtained through a transparency act by the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD, in English) already the one that Efe has had access to.

"Each and every one of the areas of the United States Government was the target of chemical companies to apply their influence," CBD scientist Nathan Donley explained to Efe, surprised by the involvement of institutions such as the Senate and the House of Representatives and by "how influential is the pesticide industry" in the US Executive.

STRONG PRESSURES

The documents revealed, which cover about 18 months, include phrases such as that the Mexican Federal Commission for the Protection against Sanitary Risks (Cofepris) "is becoming a severe problem" and suggest that the glyphosate ban could incur a breach of the renewed Free trade agreement between Mexico, the United States and Canada (T-MEC), launched in July 2020.

"There is a lot of pressure on the Mexican government to reverse the ban," Donley said, after comparing the case with that of Thailand, a country that in 2019 revoked the censorship it had imposed on this same pesticide.

In addition, the scientist observed that much of the pressure reflected in "the emails at this time" from both Bayer and CropLife "is going to continue to increase as Mexico, as would be hopeful, does more than ban a particular pesticide."

Despite the pressures, the CBD researcher said that Mexico continues to focus on "reducing agrochemicals", although he recognized "complications from T-MEC and other factors", so he did not dare to give a definitive forecast on the future of prohibition.

The Mexican Executive has not ruled after the publication of these documents prepared by different government agencies in the United States, so there is nothing to indicate that the presidential decree signed on December 31 banning glyphosate is in question.

One of the priority objectives of the current Government of Mexico, chaired by Andrés Manuel López Obrador, is to achieve sovereignty and food security, which is why the president also prohibited the cultivation of transgenic corn by 2024.

Asked by Efe, the Ministry of the Environment, the main promoter of the glyphosate ban, did not want to offer an official position on the leaks, while sources from the Ministry of the Economy declined to comment but did not deny the existence of such pressure.

USE OF GLYPHOSATE

Glyphosate has been classified since 2015 as "probably carcinogenic to humans" according to the World Health Organization (WHO), although its effectiveness makes it the most widely used pesticide in the world.

At the beginning of February, the Mexican Secretary of Agriculture, Víctor Villalobos, recalled to the concern of producers that the country will seek alternatives to glyphosate until its final ban in 2024, although he admitted that its replacement raises unknowns.

"There are compounds that are used in a lower spectrum to combat weeds, but they must be seen in the context of effectiveness, costs, opportunities and what type of weeds they attack," he accepted, while the country's agro-industrialists defend that the ban will have an impact. negative in productivity of 30%.

Glyphosate has caused more than 100,000 complaints worldwide for its carcinogenic effects and the manufacturer, the multinational Monsanto, acquired by Bayer in 2018, will pay almost 11,000 million dollars in compensation.

Despite this, in an official position shared with Efe, Bayer Mexico indicated that the product "has been used safely and successfully in Mexico and around the world for more than 40 years."

"A phase-out of glyphosate would be inconsistent with science and, unfortunately, would cause significant complications for the many Mexican farmers who depend on glyphosate to grow healthy crops safely, sustainably and effectively," the company said.

In addition, he recalled that he has the approval of numerous health and chemical regulators, including the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States Government, which in January 2020 declared that "there are no risks to human health from the current registered uses of glyphosate and that glyphosate is not likely to be carcinogenic to humans. "