

Glyphosate blocks trade between Italy and Canada

Posted by Joan Russow
Friday, 22 February 2019 10:08 -

senegal February 16, 2019 senegal
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international
21:34 16.02.2019(updated 21:44 16.02.2019) Short URL

Canadian wheat exports to Italy are still low due to the use of glyphosate. Italy, the country that chose this ban on chemicals in the European Union, did not return to its position, Radio-Canada reported.

Italy, one of Canada's two biggest wheat buyers, stopped ordering in large quantities after learning that some local farmers used glyphosate to ripen grains, Radio-Canada said. The result: a 70% reduction in Canadian wheat imports for six months, from November 2017 to August 2018.

The Canadian government recently verified, for the first time in 40 years, what percentage of producers used glyphosate in their fields. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency announced two years ago that in 2015 and 2016, nearly 47.4% of vegetables and 36.6% of grain products contained glyphosate.

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After this study, Italians also led them, taking spaghetti samples from the eight largest Italian pasta brands. The results confirm the presence of a trace of glyphosate in all samples – however, within the permissible limits.

Responding to consumer demand, Barilla, an Italian company and the world's largest producer of pasta, has reduced glyphosate levels in its food products. Wheat supplied by Canada now contains 100 times more glyphosate than the new threshold.

"Unfortunately, Canadian producers cannot fulfill this requirement," said Luigi Ganazolli, Vice President of Purchasing at Barilla, quoted by Radio-Canada.

Italy is one of the countries that chose the EU ban on glyphosate. These chemicals are considered in Europe, and especially in Italy, as potentially dangerous and cause cancer. On the other hand, it helps remove weeds without damaging the main plants. As a result, and even without Health Canada's consent, farmers use it to ripen their wheat fields.

"My children eat this food. It doesn't worry me at all, because government agencies around the world have concluded that glyphosate is safe," said a farmer on Radio-Canada.

Some people are otherwise worried about their use and opposition.

"This is product abuse. It should not be used as a drying agent or to speed up maturation," David Gehl, retired agronomist at Agri-Food Canada, told the media.

According to a report by Radio-Canada, industrial farmers are still dependent on glyphosate. To the extent that some people assume that if it is prohibited, producers have the potential to switch to more toxic products. The researchers are quoted as assuming that the best solution is to reduce the use of chemicals for the most needed cases.

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