

Coca-Killing Herbicide Should be Banned



Bogota, May 11 (RHC) — Colombia's Health Minister Alejandro Gaviria has called on the government to protect communities affected by a herbicide called glyphosate, the Bogotá Post reports.

On April 28th, the Colombian Ministry of Health recommended the immediate ban on glyphosate, a herbicide used to destroy coca plants.

This decision was triggered by a World Health Organisation (WHO) report which indicates that exposure to the chemical can cause cancer.

The ministry said it was acting in accordance with a Constitutional Court ruling which states that it should take precautions in the light of a plausible health risk.

For years, the aerial spraying of the herbicide has been a key part of efforts to eradicate coca production under the US-funded Plan Colombia.

But not everyone in President Santos' cabinet agrees with the Health Minister. Juan Carlos Pinzon, Colombia's Minister of Defense, said criminals and drug traffickers would benefit from an end to herbicide spraying.

Indigenous communities have been vocal about the negative effects of the herbicide. The FARC delegation in Havana, Cuba released a statement expressing their support for the Health Ministry's position.

"Throughout the world it is almost a unanimous decision that glyphosate is a harmful poison, harmful to humans, to crops and harmful to poor people working in the field," rebel commander Pablo Catatumbo read in a statement.

The final decision on whether or not to ban the substance lies with President Juan Manuel Santos.

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