

Glyphosate use in New Brunswick

The Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health's report on glyphosate, released July 2016, confirms what we have long feared — that the forest industry uses more glyphosate in N.B. operations than any other province in Canada.

The report found that 40% of the forest land cut in N.B. in 2014 was sprayed with glyphosate compared to 28% in Ontario, 21% in Alberta, 18% in Manitoba and only 11% in Nova Scotia.

While 205,859 hectares were cut in Québec in the same year, no forest lands in the province were sprayed with glyphosate.

The analysis puts the key public policy question squarely back into the government's hands. Namely, why, of all places in Canada, is N.B. spending so much of citizens' money on our companies' spray programs when other jurisdictions, such as Vermont and Québec, get on fine without it.

Beyond the scope of the OCMOH's report are other concerns related to glyphosate use in forestry that weigh heavily on the minds of New Brunswickers. These concerns need to be addressed by our provincial government and include the environmental impacts of the use of glyphosate on deer, moose and aquatic species, and on water quality.

The report points out the uncertainty surrounding glyphosate use worldwide. Some European countries, such as France, Sweden, Italy and the Netherlands, are arguing for a complete ban of its use in both agriculture and forestry.

We believe that this supports our recommendation that a prudent action would be to stop using it in forestry operations, especially since more responsible alternatives are available and their use, in fact, would create more jobs.

Quick facts

- N.B. farmers use less glyphosate than those in other provinces, primarily due to the fact that N.B. grows fewer bushels of genetically-modified corn and soybeans.
- Québec banned herbicide use in its forests in 2001 due to public concern over human health impacts of spraying. Vermont, which has a similar forest type to New Brunswick, also stopped using herbicides in its forests, more than two decades ago, in 1997.
- N.B.'s Auditor General recommended in her 2015 report that public forests should be managed for economic, environmental and social values, and highlighted that the province has lost money from the management of public forests for at least the period of her audit (2009-2014).

Where have glyphosate-based herbicides been banned?

- Vermont banned all herbicide applications in forestry in 1997.
- Quebec banned the use of herbicides on its Crown land in 2001.
- A bill to ban the use of aerial spraying on state-owned land is currently before a Senate committee in Oregon in the U.S. (April 2019)
- Vietnam banned the use of glyphosate-based herbicides in April 2019, saying in a statement that “long-term exposure to herbicides and pesticides affects the environment and is severely unhealthy for those exposed.”
- In 2019 France banned the sale of glyphosate-based herbicides for individual use and reaffirmed its commitment to ban glyphosate country-wide by 2021.
- Many jurisdictions across the world have placed restrictions on glyphosate use and sales due to public health concerns, with many working toward a full phase-out of herbicides containing it, including: the Netherlands, Belgium, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Denmark, India, Portugal, Italy, New Zealand, Scotland, Sweden, and more than 90 jurisdictions across Canada and the U.S.