



## **Pesticide newsletter**

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### **Regulatory news**



#### **Colombia: Resumption of aerial spraying of glyphosate in the fight against coca**

The Colombian President Iván Duque signed on April 12th, 2021, a decree authorizing the resumption of aerial sprayings of glyphosate in the fight against illicit cultivations of coca, intended for the production of cocaine. This practice had been interrupted following the recognition of the carcinogenic risks associated with the use of glyphosate by the World Health Organization (WHO).

In 2017, the Constitutional Court had declared the Colombian government's action program for the eradication of coca by fumigating fields with glyphosate unconstitutional and ordered the immediate suspension of "all activities and/or projects of aerial spraying of glyphosate to be carried out or being carried out in the municipality of Nóvita, until the Afro-descendant communities and indigenous peoples likely to be affected have been consulted and have given their consent" ([Ruling T-236](#)).

Today, the Colombian government wants to resume spraying in order to tackle coca plantations, under pressure from the United States, following the notable increase in plantations in the country (Colombia is now the leading producer of coca in the world).

For Iván Duque, there is only one solution: spraying must resume. On March 7th, 2019, the Colombian president [had asked](#) the Constitutional Court to change its 2017 decision to suspend aerial spraying of glyphosate. On April 12th, 2021, he authorized the resumption of fumigation.

Ten UN special rapporteurs, including Mary Lawlor, special rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, José Francisco Cali Tzay, special rapporteur on indigenous peoples, and Marcos Orellana, special rapporteur on toxics and human rights, tried to alert the Colombian government in [an open letter to President Duque](#) on December 17th, 2020. The UN observers warned of the risks to the environment, as well as to the health of the populations of the 104 municipalities bordering the areas concerned, the majority of whom are indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombians and peasant communities, who have been largely forgotten by Colombian national policies.

On April 16th, 2021, Amnesty International launched [a petition](#) to pressure Mr. Wilson Ruiz Orejuela, Minister of Justice and President of the National Anti-Narcotics Council. In July 2020, the organization had already [informed](#) the government about the dangers of aerial fumigation of coca plantations, which affects the food crops of peasant communities that depend on it for their livelihood. According to the NGO, this practice goes against the 2016 Peace Agreement between the Colombian government and the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces and Colombia's obligations under international human rights law. The Peace Agreement provided for the development of voluntary crop substitution programs to organize the transition from drug production to legal and food production. On the opposite, a campaign of forced crop eradication would be likely to worsen the already fragile relations between the different groups of Colombian society. In this sense, the Colombian Constitutional Court establishes, in its [resolution 387](#) of 2019, the obligation of the government to prefer voluntary substitution to forced eradication methods. It adds that the aerial spraying of glyphosate should only be used when substitution and manual eradication fail.

In spite of all the reluctance from the civil society, the government persists in its will to eliminate by force more than 13 000 hectares of coca. The intervention of the army would have allowed such pulverizations [in at least seven departments of the country](#) since the beginning of the year 2021.

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