



Pesticide newsletter

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Regulatory news



United States: EPA reverses decision to ban paraquat

On August 2, 2021, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [announced](#) the reauthorization of paraquat, a pesticide linked to Parkinson's disease. This decision reverses a restriction that the Agency recommended under the Trump administration in 2020, the ban on aerial spraying of this highly toxic herbicide. The decision effectively allows aerial spraying of paraquat on all approved crops, including within 50 feet (17 meters) of homes for some applications.

The EPA's decision is part of a process called "registration review" that occurs every 15 years and allows paraquat to remain on the market for at least the next 15 years. The interim registration decision allows EPA to move to the next step in the pesticide's regulatory review [process](#), the assessment of potential risks to wildlife.

The pesticide is one of only two pesticides banned in the European Union, [Brazil](#) and China that is used in the United States. The EPA said it temporarily allowed

aerial spraying of paraquat because of new information from agricultural chemical manufacturers and a lack of alternatives. The pesticide industry's pressure on the EPA to allow dangerous products is increasingly [documented](#).

Despite revelations of its harmful effects on humans and the environment and its ban in a number of countries, paraquat use is at an all-time [high](#) in the United States. Indeed, it is massively used against weeds that have developed resistance to glyphosate due to the fast development of genetically modified crops.

This decision comes in a period marked by numerous [lawsuits](#) in the United States related to paraquat. At least 20 [lawsuits](#) are pending, in six U.S. federal courts and various state courts. The plaintiffs, all of whom have Parkinson's disease, believe that their exposure to paraquat is responsible for their illness. In addition, a [lawsuit](#) was recently filed against the Environmental Protection Agency by farmworker and environmental groups over the reapproval of the weed killer paraquat, alleging that it puts farmworkers at an increased risk of developing Parkinson's disease. The Farmworker Association of Florida and other organizations have asked the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to [review](#) the EPA's July 13 provisional registration decision allowing continued use of the widely used herbicide, which they say violates the federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act.

By allowing agrochemical companies to continue to manufacture and market paraquat, the EPA is paving the way for more patients and more lawsuits. This is a great disappointment from the new U.S. administration, which was hoped to be more sensitive to issues of human health and environmental protection than the terrible previous one.

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