



Pesticide newsletter

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Jurisdictional news



U.S.: EPA sued over paraquat approval

Farmworker and environmental groups [have sued](#) the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for [reauthorizing](#) the herbicide paraquat on July 13, 2021, even though it puts farmworkers at increased risk of developing Parkinson's disease. The lawsuit comes amid a [growing number of product liability lawsuits](#) focusing on the link between paraquat and Parkinson's disease. In June, the Judicial Panel on Multi-District Litigation consolidated mass tort litigation against paraquat manufacturers in the Southern District of Illinois.

The Farmworker Association of Florida and other organizations asked the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals to review the EPA's July 13 tentative registration decision approving the herbicide's continued use, which they say violates the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). The plaintiffs are represented by Earthjustice.

In giving the green light, the EPA had said there was insufficient evidence to establish a clear link between exposure to paraquat herbicides and Parkinson's disease. For Syngenta, which markets paraquat under the brand name Gramoxone and is a major seller of the herbicide, there is no [credible evidence](#) that paraquat causes Parkinson's disease.

The Farmworker Association of Florida and the other plaintiffs¹, including the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, said in a statement that scientific studies have clearly shown that paraquat can increase the risk of Parkinson's disease, implying that the EPA is validating the exposure of farmworkers to "unreasonable risks." The product has been banned entirely in much of the world, including the European Union, China and Brazil, due to its toxicity.

The EPA is highlighting the fact that the interim reauthorization includes new measures to protect people from harmful exposure to the chemical, such as limiting the area over which the product can be sprayed from aircraft in a 24-hour period. It also said it still needs to complete its assessment of paraquat's impact on threatened and endangered species and examine its potential effects on the endocrine system before making a final registration decision.

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¹ California rural legal assistance Foundation, The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's research, Farmworker Justice, Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, Pesticide action Network North America (PANNA), Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), Toxic Free North Carolina.