CropLife INTERNATIONAL

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Dr. Christopher P. Wild
Director, International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)
150 Cours Albert Thomas
69372 Lyon CEDEX 08, France

Brussels, 10 June 2015

Dear Dr. Wild,

Thank you for your response to my letter regarding our concerns that IARC classifications are being misinterpreted in the absence of a clarification from IARC that the Agency's work deals with hazard identification, not risk.

We agree with your response that it is important to communicate the nature and results of evaluations undertaken for the IARC Monographs in a way that is accurate and understandable to the scientific and regulatory community, the media, the public and other stakeholders.

To that end we are encouraged to see the new Question and Answer (Q&A) document which is now provided on the Monographs website. Explaining the difference between risk and hazard succinctly will be helpful to journalists as they write about the subject. Including the Q&A in future IARC press releases – especially for the press release related to the Monograph meeting 113 that concluded this week – would also be very useful. Previous press releases have not clarified the difference between hazard and risk, and this has led journalists to write about risk, leading to unnecessary public concern and confusion over the risk of assessed products.

The distinction made in the Q&A that "the IARC Monographs Programme evaluates cancer hazards but not the risks associated with exposure" is particularly useful language for journalists. The clarification is especially important given that the Monograph website and programme documents still run under the historical, but unfortunately misleading, title "IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans". We believe this title should better reflect the nature of the work done by IARC, rather than giving the erroneous impression that "risk to humans" has been evaluated in a full risk assessment.

We would welcome the opportunity for further dialogue about your work to understand the criteria and process for selecting products for evaluation of carcinogenic potential, and the criteria for selecting literature to be considered in your evaluations.

Yours sincerely,

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CC: Dr. Margaret Chan, Director General WHO (chanm@who.int)