

Facts on Trump “Emergency” Executive Order on Phosphorus and Glyphosate

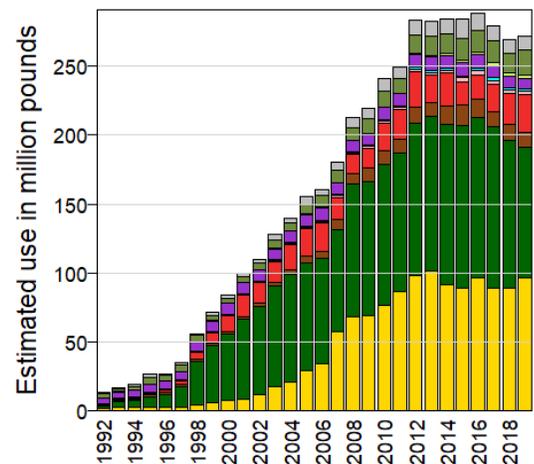
President Trump’s Feb. 18 Executive Order (“EO”) on phosphorus and glyphosate-based herbicides directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture to use the Defense Production Act (“DPA”) to ensure an adequate supply of elemental phosphorus and the pesticide glyphosate.

The DPA is a Cold War-era law designed to use U.S. purchasing power to guarantee adequate supplies of resources that are in scant supply. Currently, the United States has abundant and unfettered access to phosphate, elemental phosphorus and glyphosate.

Other key facts:

- The United States is the third-largest producer of phosphate ore, mining over 20 million metric tons of phosphate a year.¹ At current extraction rates, the United States still has several decades of minable ore based on current reserves. Phosphate mining has contaminated hundreds of thousands of acres of land and the byproducts from mining also can result in toxic and radioactive contamination of water supplies.
- Phosphate ore is mined to produce two products: phosphoric acid and elemental phosphorus. The production of elemental phosphorus is an extremely energy-intensive process that results in significant toxic and radioactive water pollution.² The sole plant within the United States that currently processes elemental phosphorus for glyphosate production is an active Superfund site.³
- Nearly all elemental phosphorus is used to produce glyphosate.⁴ Glyphosate is the most widely used pesticide in the world and over 300 million pounds of glyphosate are used by U.S. farmers annually, with another 100 million pounds used in non-agricultural setting. Exposure to glyphosate has been linked to a higher risk of developing certain types of cancer.⁵
- Many phrases used in this EO parrot or very closely mimic industry talking points on glyphosate. Both the EO and Bayer refer to glyphosate as a “cornerstone” of agriculture, necessary to “safe, affordable and available food,” and that without it, “farm yields could plummet” and “farmer costs would go up.”⁶

Glyphosate Use by Year



To speak with an expert for more information, please contact Elise Bennett on phosphate mining, Ebennett@biologicaldiversity.org; Nathan Donley on glyphosate, ndonley@biologicaldiversity.org; or Brett Hartl on the Defense Production Act, Bhartl@biologicaldiversity.org.

¹ <https://pubs.usgs.gov/periodicals/mcs2024/mcs2024-phosphate.pdf>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK598122/>

³ <https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/SiteProfiles/index.cfm?fuseaction=second.cleanup&id=1002859>

⁴ Id.

⁵ <https://www.iarc.who.int/featured-news/media-centre-iarc-news-glyphosate/>

⁶ <https://www.bayer.com/en/truth-about-glyphosate>; <https://www.bayer.com/en/ca/canada-glyphosate-0>