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U.S. LEGAL NEWS JUNE 22, 2020 / 3:16 PM / A MONTH AGO

U.S. court blocks California cancer label on Bayer's Roundup weed killer

Tina Bellon

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(Reuters) - A U.S. federal appeals court on Monday blocked California from requiring that Bayer AG label its glyphosate-based weed killer Roundup with a cancer warning, handing the company a victory in its ongoing litigation over the product.

FILE PHOTO: Monsanto Co's Roundup is shown for sale in Encinitas, California, U.S., June 26, 2017. REUTERS/Mike Blake/File Photo

In his ruling, U.S. District Judge William Shubb called California's cancer warning misleading and said the state's label is not backed up by regulatory findings.

Regulators worldwide have determined glyphosate to be safe with the exception of the World Health Organization's cancer research arm, which determined the herbicide to be a "probable carcinogen" in 2015.

Shubb on Monday said that finding alone did not support California's requirement to label glyphosate products with the term "known to the state of California to cause cancer."

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Bayer in a statement welcomed the decision, calling the ruling very important for California agriculture and for science.

The ruling, which permanently bars California from requiring a cancer warning on glyphosate-based products, is separate from the wider litigation over whether Roundup causes a type of blood cancer.

Bayer, which acquired Roundup with its \$63 billion purchase of Monsanto in 2018, faces lawsuits by more than 52,500 U.S. Roundup users, and juries in three trials have ordered the company to pay billions after finding the product caused cancer. Plaintiffs allege that Bayer manipulated studies and deceived the scientific community.

Bayer, which is appealing the verdicts, denies the claims and insists glyphosate does not cause cancer and is safe for people to use.

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The company is pursuing an out-of-court settlement of the litigation, which analysts estimate could result in a \$10 billion agreement.

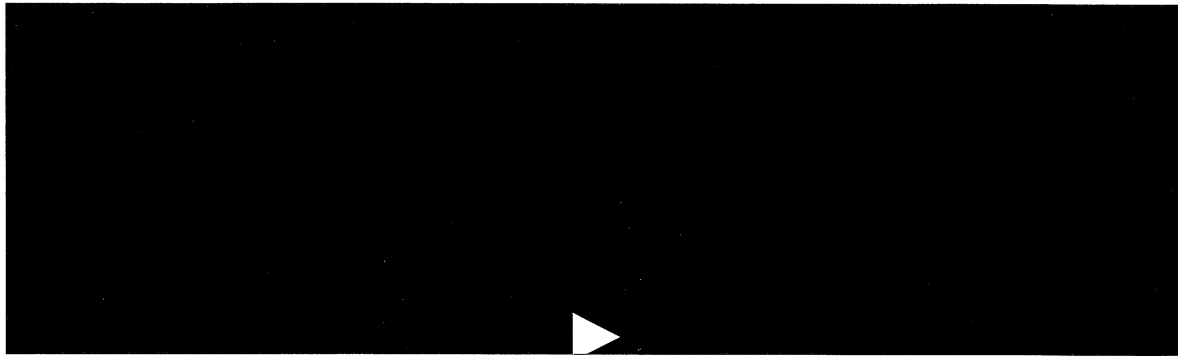
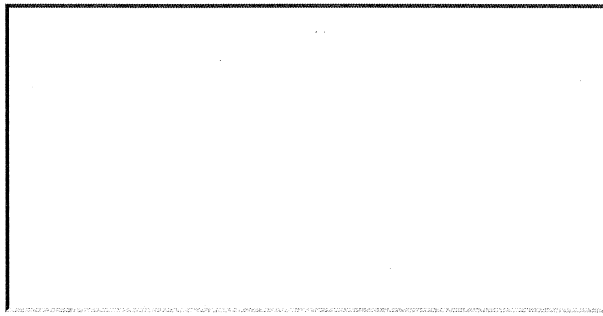
The office for California Attorney General Xavier Becerra did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

More than a dozen agricultural groups together with Bayer sued California in 2017, saying the warning label threatens significant disruptions to the U.S. food production supply chain if farmers are no longer able to use glyphosate.

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