

# Atrazine back in the news, unfortunately, thanks to EU's precaution

By ACSH Staff — February 24, 2015



Atrazine, one of the most effective and commonly used herbicides

(weed-killers) in the world, is back in the news. Today's *New York Times* [international business article](#) <sup>[1]</sup> discusses disparities in regulations that complicate Trans-Atlantic trade. Specifically referenced is the gulf that exists between American and European regulations of chemicals and pesticides, focusing on atrazine, which is produced by the Switzerland-based chemical company Syngenta. Although almost 74 million pounds of atrazine were applied in the United States in 2013, the herbicide is banned by the European Union.

According to a recent publication from the commission, the EU banned atrazine because of its long-term persistence in the environment, together with toxicity for wildlife and possible link to effects on human health. The article refers to research by Tyrone Hayes, a University of California Berkeley professor, who almost single-handedly has (unsuccessfully) tried to prove that atrazine is a threat to amphibian populations. Yet shockingly, Dr. Hayes was a co-author on a [September 2014 study](#) <sup>[2]</sup> that seemed to absolve atrazine of any role in frog deformities. Still, the Times reporter casually refers to Dr. Hayes as a scientist and proponent of atrazine's toxicities (without pointing out that these effects are confined only to Hayes lab).

Currently in the United States, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is conducting a periodic review on atrazine expected to conclude in 2016. The EPA stated that the difference in policies stemmed from Europe's decision to set a limit for all pesticides in water, regardless of the level of risk.

ACSH has [written](#) [3] [extensively](#) [4] on [atrazine](#) [4] in the past, [continuously referencing](#) [5] atrazine s [exceptional health and safety record](#) [6]. The bottom line is this: the fears surrounding atrazine overlap with the unfounded fear of chemicals in general. Despite various environmental groups efforts, there is still no credible evidence that atrazine poses any health risk when found in minuscule quantities in groundwater.

ACSH s Dr. Gil Ross added this: Our [publication on](#) [5] Pesticides and Health , referenced above, devotes several pages to atrazine. Dr. Allan Felsot, Professor at Washington State U., points out how the mechanism of its action precludes any conceivable way that the chemical can adversely interact with any animal species, period. Of course, these laws seem to apply everywhere except in the precincts of Dr. Tyrone Hayes UC-Berkeley lab.

---

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.acsh.org/news/2015/02/24/atrazine-back-news-unfortunately-thanks-eus-precaution>  
**Links**

[1] <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/business/international/a-pesticide-banned-or-not-underscores-trans-atlantic-trade-sensitivities.html>

[2] <http://acsh.org/2014/10/new-study-federal-geologists-tyrone-hayes-shows-frog-harm-atrazine/>

[3] <http://acsh.org/2013/02/atrazine-still-not-a-carcinogen/>

[4] <http://acsh.org/2012/10/atrazine-birth-defect-study-worthless/>

[5] <http://acsh.org/2011/11/pesticides-and-health/>

[6] <http://acsh.org/2010/06/toxic-terror-the-ongoing-environmentalists-battle-against-atrazine/>