

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074  
MINORITY (202) 225-5051

<http://oversight.house.gov>

September 26, 2016

Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.  
Director  
National Institutes of Health  
9000 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dear Director Collins:

The Committee is interested in learning more about the National Institutes of Health's financial support of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). IARC is a France-based cancer research agency associated with the World Health Organization.<sup>1</sup> IARC's standards and determinations for classifying substances as carcinogenic, and therefore cancer-causing, appear inconsistent with other scientific research, and have generated much controversy and alarm. For example, after years of asserting coffee is "possibly carcinogenic," IARC dropped this claim in light of mounting contradictory studies.<sup>2</sup> IARC created additional controversy when it classified a commonly used herbicide, glyphosate, as "probably carcinogenic," which contrasted with research from other organizations that found the chemical to be safe, including the European Food Safety Authority,<sup>3</sup> and the EPA.<sup>4</sup> In addition, questions persist over IARC's decision to group red meat and cured and processed meats like bacon, ham, and sausage, in, or nearly in, the same carcinogenic classification as asbestos, alcohol, arsenic, tobacco, and steroids.<sup>5</sup> Of nearly one thousand substances IARC reviewed, it determined that only one was "Probably Not Carcinogenic" to humans.<sup>6</sup>

Despite this record of controversy, retractions, and inconsistencies, IARC receives substantial taxpayer funding from NIH. NIH's grant database reflects that the agency has given IARC several millions of dollars since 1992, including over \$1.2 million so far this year.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, IARC's determinations influence American policymaking, even though IARC avoids having to meet the strict scientific standards and government scrutiny afforded to science

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<sup>1</sup> International Agency for Research on Cancer, About IARC, <https://www.iarc.fr/en/about/index.php> (last visited August 29, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> International Agency for Research on Cancer, IARC Monographs evaluate drinking coffee, maté, and very hot beverages, Press Release, June 15, 2016, [http://www.iarc.fr/en/media-centre/pr/2016/pdfs/pr244\\_E.pdf](http://www.iarc.fr/en/media-centre/pr/2016/pdfs/pr244_E.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> European Food Safety Authority, Glyphosate: EFSA updates toxicological profile, <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/151112>.

<sup>4</sup> Glyphosate Issue Paper: Evaluation of Carcinogenic Potential, EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs, Sept. 12, 2016, available at <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=EPA-HQ-OPP-2016-0385-0094>.

<sup>5</sup> Brad Plumer, The bacon freak-out: Why the WHO's cancer warnings cause so much confusion, Oct. 26, 2015, <http://www.vox.com/2015/10/26/9617928/iarc-cancer-risk-carcinogenic>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools, "International Agency for Research on Cancer," [https://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter\\_SearchResults.cfm?icde=30688166](https://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter_SearchResults.cfm?icde=30688166).

advisory committees in America.<sup>8</sup> For instance, California deems IARC an “authoritative body” for identifying cancer-causing chemicals.<sup>9</sup> Following IARC’s determination regarding glyphosate, California issued a notice of intent to list the chemical “as known to the state to cause cancer” under California law.<sup>10</sup> This listing would subject glyphosate, and products containing it, to enhanced consumer warnings and other restrictions.<sup>11</sup> If IARC later decides to adopt the findings of other researchers that glyphosate is not carcinogenic, it could create confusion and other problems in California and elsewhere.

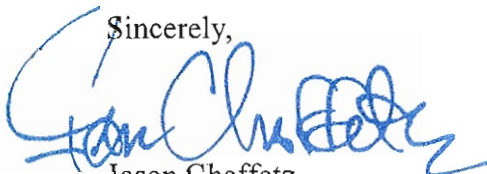
In light of these issues, please provide Committee staff with a briefing on NIH’s standards for awarding grants, and NIH’s vetting and oversight of grantees, especially foreign grantees like IARC. The Committee requests this briefing occur as soon as possible, but no later than October 10, 2016. Additionally, please provide the following information at the briefing:

1. Any and all funds given to IARC by NIH, or any of NIH’s research institutes and centers, since January 1, 2012;
2. Any and all funds expended by NIH, or any of NIH’s research institutes and centers, for travel or work referring or relating to IARC since January 1, 2012; and
3. Any and all correspondence between IARC and NIH, or any of NIH’s research institutes and centers, since January 1, 2012.

The Committee prefers, if possible, to receive all documents in electronic format. An attachment to this letter provides additional information about responding to the Committee’s request. The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X.

Please contact Drew Feeley of the Committee staff at (202) 225-5074 with any questions about this request. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz  
Chairman

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Minority Member

<sup>8</sup> See Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. App.

<sup>9</sup> 27 CCR §25306(m), available at

[https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/I470DC310D45011DEA95CA4428EC25FA0?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=\(sc.Default\)](https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/I470DC310D45011DEA95CA4428EC25FA0?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=(sc.Default))

<sup>10</sup> California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, Notice of Intent to List: Tetrachlorvinphos, Parathion, Malathion, Glyphosate, Sept. 4, 2015, available at <http://oehha.ca.gov/proposition-65/crnrr/notice-intent-list-tetrachlorvinphos-parathion-malathion-glyphosate>.

<sup>11</sup> California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, About Proposition 65, <http://oehha.ca.gov/proposition-65/about-proposition-65>.

## Responding to Committee Document Requests

1. In complying with this request, you are required to produce all responsive documents that are in your possession, custody, or control, whether held by you or your past or present agents, employees, and representatives acting on your behalf. You should also produce documents that you have a legal right to obtain, that you have a right to copy or to which you have access, as well as documents that you have placed in the temporary possession, custody, or control of any third party. Requested records, documents, data or information should not be destroyed, modified, removed, transferred or otherwise made inaccessible to the Committee.
2. In the event that any entity, organization or individual denoted in this request has been, or is also known by any other name than that herein denoted, the request shall be read also to include that alternative identification.
3. The Committee's preference is to receive documents in electronic form (i.e., CD, memory stick, or thumb drive) in lieu of paper productions.
4. Documents produced in electronic format should also be organized, identified, and indexed electronically.
5. Electronic document productions should be prepared according to the following standards:
  - (a) The production should consist of single page Tagged Image File ("TIF"), files accompanied by a Concordance-format load file, an Opticon reference file, and a file defining the fields and character lengths of the load file.
  - (b) Document numbers in the load file should match document Bates numbers and TIF file names.
  - (c) If the production is completed through a series of multiple partial productions, field names and file order in all load files should match.
  - (d) All electronic documents produced to the Committee should include the following fields of metadata specific to each document:  
  
BEGDOC, ENDDOC, TEXT, BEGATTACH, ENDATTACH,  
PAGECOUNT, CUSTODIAN, RECORDTYPE, DATE, TIME, SENTDATE,  
SENTTIME, BEGINDATE, BEGINTIME, ENDDATE, ENDTIME, AUTHOR, FROM,  
CC, TO, BCC, SUBJECT, TITLE, FILENAME, FILEEXT, FILESIZE,  
DATECREATED, TIMECREATED, DATELASTMOD, TIMELASTMOD,  
INTMSGID, INTMSGHEADER, NATIVELINK, INTFILPATH, EXCEPTION,  
BEGATTACH.
6. Documents produced to the Committee should include an index describing the contents of the production. To the extent more than one CD, hard drive, memory stick, thumb drive, box or folder is produced, each CD, hard drive, memory stick, thumb drive, box or folder should contain an index describing its contents.

7. Documents produced in response to this request shall be produced together with copies of file labels, dividers or identifying markers with which they were associated when the request was served.
8. When you produce documents, you should identify the paragraph in the Committee's schedule to which the documents respond.
9. It shall not be a basis for refusal to produce documents that any other person or entity also possesses non-identical or identical copies of the same documents.
10. If any of the requested information is only reasonably available in machine-readable form (such as on a computer server, hard drive, or computer backup tape), you should consult with the Committee staff to determine the appropriate format in which to produce the information.
11. If compliance with the request cannot be made in full by the specified return date, compliance shall be made to the extent possible by that date. An explanation of why full compliance is not possible shall be provided along with any partial production.
12. In the event that a document is withheld on the basis of privilege, provide a privilege log containing the following information concerning any such document: (a) the privilege asserted; (b) the type of document; (c) the general subject matter; (d) the date, author and addressee; and (e) the relationship of the author and addressee to each other.
13. If any document responsive to this request was, but no longer is, in your possession, custody, or control, identify the document (stating its date, author, subject and recipients) and explain the circumstances under which the document ceased to be in your possession, custody, or control.
14. If a date or other descriptive detail set forth in this request referring to a document is inaccurate, but the actual date or other descriptive detail is known to you or is otherwise apparent from the context of the request, you are required to produce all documents which would be responsive as if the date or other descriptive detail were correct.
15. Unless otherwise specified, the time period covered by this request is from January 1, 2009 to the present.
16. This request is continuing in nature and applies to any newly-discovered information. Any record, document, compilation of data or information, not produced because it has not been located or discovered by the return date, shall be produced immediately upon subsequent location or discovery.
17. All documents shall be Bates-stamped sequentially and produced sequentially.
18. Two sets of documents shall be delivered, one set to the Majority Staff and one set to the Minority Staff. When documents are produced to the Committee, production sets shall be delivered to the Majority Staff in Room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority Staff in Room 2471 of the Rayburn House Office Building.

19. Upon completion of the document production, you should submit a written certification, signed by you or your counsel, stating that: (1) a diligent search has been completed of all documents in your possession, custody, or control which reasonably could contain responsive documents; and (2) all documents located during the search that are responsive have been produced to the Committee.

### **Definitions**

1. The term “document” means any written, recorded, or graphic matter of any nature whatsoever, regardless of how recorded, and whether original or copy, including, but not limited to, the following: memoranda, reports, expense reports, books, manuals, instructions, financial reports, working papers, records, notes, letters, notices, confirmations, telegrams, receipts, appraisals, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, prospectuses, inter-office and intra-office communications, electronic mail (e-mail), contracts, cables, notations of any type of conversation, telephone call, meeting or other communication, bulletins, printed matter, computer printouts, teletypes, invoices, transcripts, diaries, analyses, returns, summaries, minutes, bills, accounts, estimates, projections, comparisons, messages, correspondence, press releases, circulars, financial statements, reviews, opinions, offers, studies and investigations, questionnaires and surveys, and work sheets (and all drafts, preliminary versions, alterations, modifications, revisions, changes, and amendments of any of the foregoing, as well as any attachments or appendices thereto), and graphic or oral records or representations of any kind (including without limitation, photographs, charts, graphs, microfiche, microfilm, videotape, recordings and motion pictures), and electronic, mechanical, and electric records or representations of any kind (including, without limitation, tapes, cassettes, disks, and recordings) and other written, printed, typed, or other graphic or recorded matter of any kind or nature, however produced or reproduced, and whether preserved in writing, film, tape, disk, videotape or otherwise. A document bearing any notation not a part of the original text is to be considered a separate document. A draft or non-identical copy is a separate document within the meaning of this term.
2. The term “communication” means each manner or means of disclosure or exchange of information, regardless of means utilized, whether oral, electronic, by document or otherwise, and whether in a meeting, by telephone, facsimile, email (desktop or mobile device), text message, instant message, MMS or SMS message, regular mail, telexes, releases, or otherwise.
3. The terms “and” and “or” shall be construed broadly and either conjunctively or disjunctively to bring within the scope of this request any information which might otherwise be construed to be outside its scope. The singular includes plural number, and vice versa. The masculine includes the feminine and neuter genders.
4. The terms “person” or “persons” mean natural persons, firms, partnerships, associations, corporations, subsidiaries, divisions, departments, joint ventures, proprietorships, syndicates, or other legal, business or government entities, and all subsidiaries, affiliates, divisions, departments, branches, or other units thereof.

5. The term “identify,” when used in a question about individuals, means to provide the following information: (a) the individual's complete name and title; and (b) the individual's business address and phone number.
6. The term “referring or relating,” with respect to any given subject, means anything that constitutes, contains, embodies, reflects, identifies, states, refers to, deals with or is pertinent to that subject in any manner whatsoever.
7. The term “employee” means agent, borrowed employee, casual employee, consultant, contractor, de facto employee, independent contractor, joint adventurer, loaned employee, part-time employee, permanent employee, provisional employee, subcontractor, or any other type of service provider.