

# A Guide to France's Emerging Progressive Badassery

Supermarkets that donate their excess food to people in need, roofs covered in greenery, the private sale of glyphosate banned... Should we expect anything less from a country as committed to strikes and protests as France?

Recently, France has been riding a streak of increasingly environmentally and health conscious decisions by their government that have the potential to change the way the world looks at these issues. When a developed nation with worldwide leader status like France enacts a new policy, other countries look at them as an example of what could happen if they, too, were to try something new. Whether or not you know much about or agree with France's politics, many of their recent steps towards greener and healthier living deserve a closer look.

## Reducing Food Waste

Around a third of all food produced for human consumption is wasted or lost every year. The richer the country is, the higher their rate of food waste. Developed countries are more likely to experience higher levels of waste at later stages in the supply chain. Due to a law unanimously approved by French parliament in May of this year, large supermarkets in France are now required to give unsold food to charity or donate it for animal feed. Prior to this new law, pouring bleach over unsold food to discourage dumpster diving was a common practice. While businesses opposed to the law claim they should be allowed to make their own decisions regarding food waste, the law (if not repealed by the French Constitutional Council) has at the very least inspired a closer look at reducing or recycling food waste options.

# Green as Far as the Eye Can See

New roofs have an amazing potential. In March of 2015, France followed Germany, Australia, and prominent cities like Toronto, Canada in promoting green roofs, requiring all new roofs in commercial districts to be partially covered in plants or solar panels. The law lets the business choose which option they would prefer, although either option results in significant environmental, practical, and potentially financial benefits. While environmentalists say the law is too limited because it applies only to commercial buildings, it is an important step forward into incorporating green energy and thinking into everyday life.

People are already familiar with the environmental benefits of the sun. Solar panels can save money on energy bills, provide energy security, independence, and reliability, and reduce the use of fossil fuels with their renewable, consistent energy source. Roofs with plants on top of them are more open to creative interpretation, as there's a choice to be made between growing food or choosing a more ornamental option. Even the ornamental greenery option provides a range of environmental advantages. Plant life filters pollutants in the air and alleviates stress on the sewer system with its natural ability to manage rainwater. Both options also increase the value of properties through aesthetic improvements and by prolonging HVAC, heating, and ventilation systems.

## The Ban of Glyphosate

Glyphosate, the main ingredient in Round-up and an all around health hazard, is treated somewhat differently in Europe than it is in the United States. While the interests of the corporations manufacturing the pesticides still triumph in the U.S., several European countries have taken a World Health Organization report of glyphosate's role in causing cancer seriously. In June 2015, France banned the sale of glyphosate

over the counter, joining countries like the Netherlands. Banning glyphosate three months after the announcement of the WHO cancer study shows how quickly a government willing to put its foot down could make a difference in minimizing the amount of hazardous herbicides and pesticides all around us. At the very least, the French government is displaying a heartening distrust of Monsanto.

## **Our Oh So Chic Canary in the Coalmine**

That's great for France, but what about people who live in the U.S.? While the U.S. is a much larger country than France, keeping an eye on how other developed nations around the world are responding to the need for greener energy, less wasteful policies, and a reduction in the harmful, cancer-causing substances can give us needed ammunition. Seeing a country enact at least three major green policies in less than a year can be an incredibly convincing to those struggling to hold us to the crumbling status quo.

Maybe we can also find inspiration in our own lives. We can add a solar panel, reevaluate our food waste, go organic in our own gardening, or take the next step in our environmental journey. After all, the French can't beat us in everything.

### **Recommended Reading:**

- *5 Cost-Effective Ways To Home Container Gardening – DIY*
- *Urban Gardening*
- *How Vertical Gardening Could Help Save the World*
- *How to Start a Vegetable Garden – How to Grow Vegetables*
- *Can Progressive, Cutting-edge Organic Agriculture Feed Everyone?*