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ACTIONS WITHIN JOINT INTERNATIONAL GMO OPPOSITION MONTH (JIGMOM) IN RUSSIA

Digested by the CIS Alliance for Biosafety
Kostroma

On April 1 a street action against GMOs took place in Kostroma (regional capital in Central Russia). Activists of the NGO For the Sake of Life urged regional authorities to declare the region a GMO free zone. Ecologists plan to undertake concrete steps to introduce GMO free law in the region.

The NGO will prepare and lobby in regional Duma (Parliament) a legislative initiative: adoption of local Law "On Food Safety" and declaring Kostroma region a GMO free zone. (According to the Statute of Kostroma oblast' NGOs have a power to initiate legislation.)

"Moreover, - said leader For the Sake of Life - We plan to fight for the amendments to the article 10 of Federal Consumer law in order to introduce a ban on using GMOs in babyfood".

Archangelsk

In Archangelsk (North-West of Russia) JIGMOM started on April 1 with the call to local authorities to uncover information on tests of food products on GMOs.

Regional sanitary inspection provided to local NGO Etas a list of products tested negative to GMOs. But GM-positive products are still under secret.

Last year Archangelsk sanitary inspection conducted 228 tests of products on GMOs. 22 of them contained GMOs, but their brands were not revealed. This year they already checked 70, and there is no information available on how many of them were GM.

"The list of GM free food products provided by sanitary inspection Archangelsk activists plan to pass to local shops and retailers will provide it with green labels. This will be a start of GMO free zone initiative in Archangelsk region", - said Alexey Ovchinnikov from Etas.

Murmansk

On April 11 young ecologists of Kola Peninsula run a street action for GMO free zone in Murmansk. They went out to central square of the city with a 10 meter poster "GMO Free Zone" and in costumes of corn, carrot, tomato and banana. Two activists dressed in rabbit costumes where holding poster "No experiments".

Saint-Petersburg

Students of the Saint-Petersburg State Agrarian University collected more than 250 signatures under an Open Letter to the Governor of Saint Petersburg Valentina Matvienko urging her to declare the city a GMO free zone. On May 2 they passed it to the Governor office.

Different actions and other events also took place in Bryansk and Yekaterinburg regions.

PHOTOS AGAINST GMOs

Within a Joint International GMO Opposition Month the CIS Alliance for Biosafety initiated the Internet photo-action "For My Place Free of GMOs".

People from all over CIS were invited to submit photos with posters promoting GMO free idea at local and national level.

People form 4 countries: Moldova and Transnistria, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine already took part in the action. Only from Russia organizers got pictures from 7 regions and districts (Bryansk, Kostroma, Moscow, Murmansk - two districts, Saint-Petersburg and Yekaterinburg).

RUSSIAN SCIENTISTS PRESENTED NEW DATA ON THE IMPACT OF GMOs ON ANIMAL HEALTH.

By Eremurus Club

"The results of news research of the impact of GMOs on living organisms question the idea of their safety", - said Alexander Baranov, president of All-National Association of Genetic Safety at the press-conference that was held on the 16th of April in Moscow. At the event the results of new experiment made in the Vavilov's Agrarian University of Saratov (regional capital on Volga river) by the member of the association were presented to public. The research demonstrated the serious pathological defections in experimental mice fed by GM-soy.

As Maria Konovalova (engineer-biotechnologist, post-graduate who made the experiment under supervision of doctor of medicine, professor V.Blinov) reported at the press-conference a herbicide resistant RoundUp Ready Monsanto soy (variety 40-3-2) approved for human consumption in Russian Federation and in many other countries induced serious changes in morphology of visceras (liver, kidney, testis) of mice, in their histological and cell structures. GM-soy also is found to impact the amount of littlings, and mortality of brood. Soy is supposed to provoke an increased aggressiveness and loss of maternal instinct.

"Mice that were fed by protein from GM soy demonstrated different behavior, some of females suffocated their kids and then ate their brains. And with is also very sad that we identified abnormalities of mousekins, whose mothers were fed by GM soy", - said Maria Konovalova.

At the press-conference Baranov reported that his association has sent an Open Letter to the Chief sanitary doctor of Russia Gennadiy Onischenko, whose department is responsible for controlling the safety of GM food. The NGO urged him to temporally revoke the authorization of approved GM food in Russia and to declare a moratorium on registration of new varieties until entire data related to GMO impact on human health is available.

GMOs AGAIN WERE FOUND IN NESTLE BABY FOOD. THIS TIME IN KAZAKHSTAN.

By Eremurus Club

At the 13th of April the CIS NGOs presented to public the results of independent baby food tests on GMOs at the press-conference in Almaty (Kazakhstan). Event was dedicated to the Joint International Month of Opposition to GMOs (JIGMOM), action against GMOs which

takes place all over the world. Press-conference was organized by members of CIS Alliance for Biosafety - local NGO Foundation for Integration of Ecological Culture (FIEC) and Moscow members of the Alliance.

Testing of babyfood was made in accredited laboratory Olympic in Moscow. Among 6 products of different companies GMOs were found only in NAN non-lactose milk substitute (produced by Nestle in Netherlands and sold in Almaty shops).

According to the Kazakhstan Law "On quality and safety of food", any use of GMOs in babyfood is prohibited since 2004. But no control over GMOs in this country is in place. Standards for testing of food on GMOs still not adopted in Kazakhstan, it means that the results of Kazakh labs cannot be recognized as official ones. That is why members of the Alliance tested babyfood purchased in Kazakhstan in Moscow lab.

According to Eugene Klimov, leader of FIEC, his NGO in cooperation of Consumer League of Kazakhstan is preparing a demand to Nestle company to stop violating Kazakhstan laws. Then NGOs plan to bring a case against the firm.

"This is not a first time when Nestle babyfood products sold in CIS are found to contain GMOs. We support the demands of our Kazakhstan colleagues and urge the company to respect the rights of consumers and quit applying unfair double-standards in our countries", - said Victoria Kopeykina, secretary of CIS Alliance for Biosafety at the press conference in Almaty.

A REPRESENTATIVE OF MOSCOW CITY DUMA REPORTED ON GMO FREE ACTIVITIES OF THE REGION IN BRUSSELS

By Eremurus Club

3rd International Conference "GMO Free Regions, Biodiversity and Rural Development" was recently held in Brussels (in April 19-20), it was supported by European Parliament. For the first time not only Russian NGOs (e.g. Eremurus Club), but also the representative of Moscow authorities took part in this event.

Veronika Kochetova, member of Moscow City Duma Commission on Healthcare in her presentation at plenary gave a picture of general situation with GMOs in Russia and of the experience of Moscow authorities in providing regulation aimed to prevent expansion of food products containing GMOs.

According to Kochetova, the Russian Federation today is a dumping ground for GMO containing products. The flood of GM-products is

noticeable especially during the last three years. According to experts, we receive about 500 thousands tons of GMOs each year that are used in food products.

The Law "On Protection of Consumer Rights" that requires mandatory labeling for GM-products does not work. You will never find any label of that kind, but when these products are tested in the laboratories, GMO components are often found.

"The Moscow Authorities are not satisfied with such a situation, so they take their own local measures. Lyudmila Stebenkova, chair of Moscow City Duma Commission on Healthcare initiated political discussion of GMO regulation in the Duma. During last year we have organized round tables, hearings, sessions of the commission, dedicated to this problem", - said Kochetova.

"Fortunately all our initiatives in this field were supported by both regional authorities (especially by Mayor of Moscow - Yuriy Luzhkov) and NGOs (Association of Biological, Ecological and Food Safety, CIS Alliance for Biosafety and others). As a result, the amendments to the Law of Moscow City "On Food Safety in Moscow" were adopted in 2006. Now it is not allowed to purchase GMO-containing products on budget-money. It's not so big step, but it's a move toward making Moscow a real GMO-free zone", - added Kochetova. This year the Moscow Government has allocated means for establishing 16 independent laboratories for testing of GMOs.

The next step was The Governmental Order of Moscow from February 17, 2007, in which manufacturers are encouraged to label their products as GMO free. The system of such voluntary labeling will be introduced in July 1, 2007.

Kochetova told that Moscow City Duma and Moscow Government supported the scientific experiments of Russian scientist Irina Ermakova. Mrs. Ermakova is doctor of biology, leading scientist of Institute of Higher Nervous Activity and Neurophysiology RAS, expert of The NATO-Russia scientific cooperation (Committee on Science for Peace and Security). She is one of a few scientists in the world who investigated the influence of GMO on future generations (or posterities). Additional feeding of rat females by GM soy (Ready Roundup, line 40.3.2) led to the high mortality of rat pups (more than one half) and poor development of survived ones (they were sick and weighed less than the pups from control groups). Pathological changes were found in testis and in liver of males fed by GM-soy seeds. Scientists did not succeed to get the second generation. Obtained data are shocking. The results of her experiments were published and can be easily found in Internet. The new experiment supported by Moscow authorities will take place in 2008 and it is supposed to be open for public.

----- archived at <http://www.gene.ch/> -----
