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MOSCOW GMO FREE LABELING SYSTEM STARTED WORKING

<http://www.biosafety.ru/index.php?idp=143&idnt=60&idn=1351>

By Eremurus Club

Although many food companies and lobbyists criticized the initiative of Moscow Mayor (who recently introduced volunteer GMO free labeling with 0% tolerance to GMOs for manufacturers selling their products in Moscow), new labeling system was successfully launched this summer. According to Moscow Department of Consumer Market, by August 30 companies and more than 100 brands were certified as GMO free and will have special green label. The Department reports that 100 companies asked for such GMO free label and now their applications are under consideration.

Rusbrand - association of food producers (large proGM companies included) in cooperation with their ally - KonfOP (Russian member of Consumers International) criticize Moscow initiative, saying that local regulation of GMOs will disintegrate Russian economy and will fuel prices.

Moscow authorities, many other NGOs and independent experts are sure that the region with more than 10 millions of population should be a GMO free zone with its local regulation. 16 laboratories are being created now in Moscow. To test products for GMOs the bio-chip method invented by Russian scientists is used.

Majority of certified companies are Russian. One international manufacturer - Russian subsidiary of Norwegian company Rieber & Son ASA Group (snack producer) received Moscow GMO free label by now.

The Decree "On Provisional Measures on Quality Assurance and Safety of Food Products and on Informing of Consumers In Moscow" was adopted on the 13th of February 2007. This decree introduced special "Moscow GMO free label", rules for its obtaining, regular testing of products in Moscow labs and creation of public list of the producers whose products contain GMOs.

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DEBATES AROUND GMO LABELING GOING ON IN RUSSIA

<http://www.biosafety.ru/index.php?idp=143&idnt=60&idn=1352>

By Eremurus Club

Companies, deputies and some NGOs are now lobbying to change GMO labeling legislation. According to Russian Consumer Protection Law all food containing GMOs must be labeled. The law does not define any threshold. According to this law no GMOs allowed to be present in products without special indication.

Proponents of changes say the law should allow 0,9% of GMO content to be used in food without labeling. They explain this is needed to harmonize Russian legislation with European

in order to avoid further obstacles in trade. Such draft law has already passed Duma and been introduced to Federation Council (Upper Chamber), but has been rejected by senators. At the same time the Chief Sanitary Doctor whose office is responsible for GMO oversight and research, issued a new sanitary and hygienic requirements, which came into force on the 1st of September. And it is said in this document that 0,9% of GMO content in food products is always accidental and technical unavoidable.

Part of Russian NGOs, experts and local authorities disagree with this and think that Russia should protect its 0% tolerance to GMOs.

The answer to the question if the efforts to change federal law by fixing the 0,9% standard are aimed to protect consumer rights (as proponents say) is controversial. But it is obvious that Russian producers or foreign companies working in the country have never labeled their products honestly. They did not label GMOs in the beginning of century when 5% of GMOs in products was allowed to be used without labeling. They did nothing when it was 0% tolerance and they most probably will not do anything to label 0,9%. Another important thing in this context is that Russia does not have organic food standards, thus people are unable to choose GMO free and safe products.

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#### NEW GM-MAIZE FOR RUSSIAN CONSUMERS

<http://www.biosafety.ru/index.php?idp=143&idnt=60&idn=1350>

By CIS Alliance for Biosafety

As became recently known this summer Russian science and research Institute of Nutrition approved using GM corn MON 88017, resistant to glyphosate pesticide and rootworm, in food industry and for sale.

Mentioned line of GM-corn, having two alien genes, is the latest development of American "Monsanto Company", which was approved for consuming in the US in 2005, however, European Union refused to register it.

Also this summer Russian food specialists approved using GM maize MIR604 by Syngenta resistant to corn rootworm, for human consumption. It is the first GM crop owned by Syngenta alone registered in Russia, previously this company registered for food only its GM sugar beet in partnership with Monsanto. This crop is registered only in US, it has been approved there only this year. It looks like Russian authorities intend to "harmonize" approval lists of both countries within the process of joining WTO and associated bilateral GMO Russia-USA side letter (see <http://www.biosafety.ru/index.php?idp=143&idn=1194&idnt=60>). According to the officially available documentation today in Russia there are from 12 to 17 GM varieties approved for food. Such uncertainty appeared due to the fact that publicly available information on re-activation of expired application is not complete.

Russian GMO approval system is totally non-transparent to public. Information about submitted applications is also unavailable. The only way to learn about new registered GMO lines is to find this information on the Internet site if one knows how to navigate.

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#### FOR GMO FREE SIBERIA!

<http://www.biosafety.ru/index.php?idp=143&idnt=60&idn=1349>

By Eremurus Club and Tomsk Student Ecological Inspection

Second in Russia antiGMO youth camp was held near Tomsk (Western Siberia) this summer. First one took place last year in Murmansk on Kola Peninsula.

Dozens of young people from Tomsk and neighboring regions took part in it. Camp agenda included workshops, street actions and discussions.

Main topics were the following:

- Raising awareness of local people, producers and authorities to GMO free idea
- Volunteer refusal of foodproducers from GMO sources
- Possibility of the approval of the regional law on Food Safety similar to Moscow one, prohibiting using budget money for purchasing food with GMOs.
- Banning of GM-crops growing in Tomsk region
- Development of inter-regional program of NGO cooperation aimed to control GM food products.

At the end of the camp activists conducted the street action with slogan "I want to know what I eat!". Young people organized a small performance: an activist dressed as carrot and carrying banner "For GMO free Tomsk!" drew a circle around himself, inside the circle he wrote "Tomsk region". People in white robes went around him with medical syringes and tried to break through this circle.

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### NGOS CALL FOR LIBERATION OF KAZAKHSTAN FROM GMOS

<http://www.biosafety.ru/index.php?idp=143&idnt=60&idn=1353>

By CIS Alliance for Biosafety

On August 1, in Almaty, Kazakhstan local NGOs - Foundation for Integration of Ecological Culture - FIEC (member of CIS Alliance for Biosafety) and Kazakh Consumer League demanded to stop selling the lot of Nestle baby food, containing GMOs and called for declaring moratorium on GMOs in the country.

Earlier in April NGOs accused Nestle of violation of Kazakhstan legislation by using GMOs in milk substitute (see <http://www.biosafety.ru/index.php?idp=143&idn=1189&idnt=60>). According to the Kazakhstan Law "On Quality and Safety of Food", any use of GMOs in babyfood is prohibited since 2004.

GMOs were found in NAN non-lactose milk substitute produced by Nestle in Netherlands and sold in Almaty shops. Tests were made in Moscow lab Olympic.

Nestle claimed that it was not true and proposed to test a control sample of its babyfood in Kazakhstan nutrition academy lab. But 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. Moreover, local NGOs do not trust national nutrition research academy who lobby GMOs. Instead FIEC suggested Nestle to test its controversial babyfood in EU, but still did not receive an answer. Now NGOs plan to bring a case against the firm.

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