

European Commission flies in the face of European Parliament on GE trees

What about responsibility and the precautionary principle, European Commission?

Currently, at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Bonn, parties are discussing a possible moratorium on the release of genetically engineered (GE) trees.

In the Resolution of 24th April on preparations for the meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Bonn, Germany, the European Parliament:

"Urges the Commission and Member States to:

Ensure that COP9 adopts a final decision to ... agree a moratorium on the environmental release, including field trials, and commercial use of genetically modified trees."

However, the European Commission is refusing to follow this line. It is therefore defying not only the European Parliament, the Precautionary Principle, many EU member states and countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Island States. The African Group has been particularly strong in its position.

Andrey Laletin, Chairman of Friends of Siberia Forests (Russia) said: "The CBD is an international agreement with a collective approach to decision-making. Regions trying to impose their own narrow interests on the collective decision-making process undermine the fundamental principles and the spirit of international agreements such as the CBD."

Helena Paul of Econexus (UK) said: "We are dismayed by the way the European Commission, which is unelected, is flying in the face of parties, democracy and science. Elected representatives are accountable to their people and clearly recognise that public opinion is in favour of a moratorium, but the EC is blatantly attempting to defy democratic process."

Antje Lorch of the Gene-ethical Network (Germany) said: "We were glad to see in April that the European Parliament decided that it wanted a moratorium on field trials and commercial use of GE trees, and that it explicitly urged the EC to ensure this at COP9. But at the negotiations here in Bonn, the EC is not working towards a moratorium. Considering that the high risks of these new technologies cannot yet be assessed, we call the EC to join the African countries and others in suspending GE tree releases and to be apply the Precautionary Principle."

Prof. Hubert Weiger, president of the BUND/Friends of Earth of Germany concluded: "Our forests have a wide variety of trees that are well adapted to a wide spectrum of habitats, but GE trees are likely to be produced in monocultures of no value for biodiversity. With GE trees we are attacking the life insurance of our forests. They are no solution and the EP has taken a wise and responsible decision we support unambiguously. We strongly urge the EC to implement the decision of the democratically elected European Parliament."

ENDS

Calls to:

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Note for editors:

1. The full text of the Resolution of the European Parliament from 24 April 2008 (P6_TA-PROV(2008)0179 is available at

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0179+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>