

EUROPÄISCHES PARLAMENT



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Members of the European Parliament
Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
Rue Wiertz 60, ASP 8 G 351, B-1047 Brussels

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission
Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner for Health
Cc to all other Commissioners

EU GMO legislation and animal feed imports to the EU

Dear President, dear Commissioner,

At the European Commission's Orientation debate on GMOs on May 7th 2008, the College declared that a decision on animal feed imports and EU GMO approvals and laws would be reached by the summer. We understand that different considerations for lifting the EU's "zero tolerance" policy are currently being made and discussed within the Commission. This causes us concern for two main reasons which we feel is important to bring to your attention.

Firstly, "zero tolerance" is the current EU legislation. It can not be lifted without a full legislative procedure, including a democratic discussion and votes within the European Union institutions. We are concerned by reports that the Commission is deliberately trying to find ways to avoid a co-decision process, thus excluding MEPs, the elected representatives of European citizens, from any decisions on this issue.

You will be aware of the controversy surrounding genetically modified crops, and the strength of public opinion in Europe on this issue. We urge you to reconsider bypassing the European Parliament in order to weaken the EU's GMO laws without the due democratic process. An acceptance of genetic contamination with GMOs that are not authorized in the EU would then be based on third countries' laws: The Commission seems to be willing to accept traces of GMOs that were authorized by the food safety authorities in third countries. For good reasons the EU has its' own sovereign system of handling food and feed safety. This must not be replaced by USFDA opinions.

Any change to GMO laws will be controversial in Europe, but a decision to do this undemocratically so soon after the Irish Referendum vote would not, in our opinion, boost public confidence in the European project. We therefore urge you to ensure that any decisions regarding "zero tolerance" include the European Parliament.

Our second point relates to whether dropping "zero tolerance" is in fact necessary. Having examined global trade in agricultural commodities (in particular soy which we understand is the main issue for the livestock industry), the current high prices and the EU's animal feed sector, we are of the strong opinion that weakening the EU's GMO laws will in no way help livestock farmers.

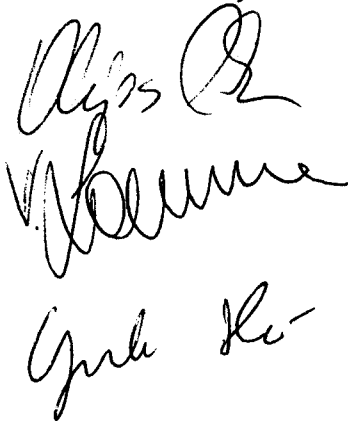
The EU's main producer countries – Brazil and Argentina - only grow what the EU is willing to import. Monsanto's new Round Up Ready Soy (RR2) is quoted as the main risk regarding "zero tolerance", but has not however been put forward for commercialization either in Argentina¹ or Brazil².

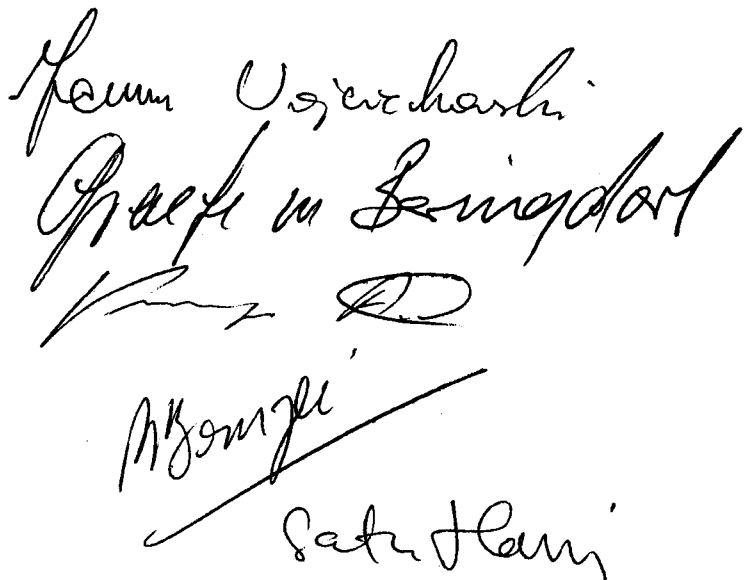
We therefore conclude that "zero tolerance" poses no immediate threat to animal feed imports, and that key producer countries to the EU are not on the verge of commercializing any GMO that would challenge supply to the EU. Whilst the EU livestock, food and beverage and feed industries have made calls for "zero tolerance" to be dropped, in their analysis of the issue³, they too acknowledge that this problem is not reality now but might be a "possibility in the coming years".

The EU does of course have a clear responsibility to take all measures possible to help economic sectors that are suffering from the increase in food and feed prices. However, such measures must be based on valid legislation. As MEPs we are committed to find democratic solutions and to support all sectors and the European public in these challenging times.

We look forward to hearing from you, and would welcome a meeting with you on this issue. We will also be writing to our national Governments.

Yours sincerely





¹ CONABIA (Argentina's equivalent to EFSA)

² Interview with Brazilian officials

³ Economic impacts of low level presence of not yet approved GMOs on the EU food sector. May 2008. Graham Brookes, GBC Ltd. Commissioned by CIAA, COCERAL, EUROMAISIER, FEFAC, FERM, and GAM.

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