

Freedom of choice on GMOs finds broad support in EU Parliament

Commission and Council must now step forward in their role to strengthen the right for GMO free food

Brussels, 05/07/2011 – Today the European Parliament adopted its opinion on the possibility for Member States to restrict or prohibit the cultivation of GMOs in their territory. The IFOAM EU Group welcomes MEPs' support for a change of EU legislation that would finally oblige all member states to take appropriate measures to avoid the unintended presence of GMOs in other products and to establish liability systems that would ensure that the polluter has to pay in cases of GMO contamination.

"The European Parliament strongly supported today the right of member states and EU citizens to stay GMO free," states Marco Schlüter, Director of the IFOAM EU Group¹. "This is a great step in the right direction. EU citizens and the whole food chain from plant breeders to farmers and retailers need a solid legal framework that guarantees them their right to opt for GMO free feed and food. This right is threatened by GMO contamination: Cases of GMO commingling in GMO-free products have already cost millions, till now mostly paid by farmers, food industry and taxpayers². This problem must be addressed in all member states. Therefore the Council must now overcome its standstill on this issue and support the MEPs' initiative to make measures that prevent GMO contamination, as well as clear liability rules, EU wide compulsory."

"We also welcome that the European Parliament vote provides member states with a strengthened list of grounds and legal certainty to restrict or ban the cultivation of GMOs which strengthens the possibility to protect food production and environment in whole regions," adds policy coordinator Antje Kölling. "But despite the positive outcome of the vote, we must not forget that many other questions related to GMO in food, feed and on the fields finally need to be resolved. The IFOAM EU Group calls for a moratorium³ on GMO cultivation and GMO approvals as long as the EU legal framework dealing with GMOs does not guarantee the full protection of environment, human health, animal health and the economic viability of the GMO-free food and feed sector."

More information:

IFOAM EU Group, phone + 32-2-280 12 23, Fax: +32-2-735 73 81,
info@ifoam-eu.org, www.ifoam-eu.org

NOTES:

- (1) The **IFOAM EU Group** represents more than 300 member organisations of IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) in the EU-27, the EU accession countries and EFTA. Member organisations include: consumer, farmer and processor associations; research, education and advisory organisations; certification bodies and commercial organic companies.
- (2) Some extracts of publications about economic costs of GMO contamination and prevention in the food sector:
 - Six case studies of **small and medium sized food and feed processors** for the prevention of GMO contaminations reveal costs between **48 000 and 876 800 Euro per year**: Economic impacts of labelling thresholds for the adventitious presence of genetically engineered organisms in conventional and organic seed, study published by IFOAM EU Group 2009:
http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/around_world/eu_groupnew/positions/publications/pdf/IFOAMEU_GMO-freeSeedStudy.pdf
 - A baby food producer (90% organic, 10% conventional) spends per year 5000 Euro for testing/sampling plus analysis; 40 000 Euro for reporting (traceability), 35 000 Euro for staff training, 50 000 Euro for audit of commodity suppliers and has moreover to cover 770 000 Euro of additional costs for raw materials, that result from higher costs of the raw material suppliers. Source: Schadensbericht Gentechnik, Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft (Hrsg.) 2009:
http://www.boelw.de/uploads/media/BOELW_Schadensbericht_Gentechnik090318.pdf
 - The overall costs the contamination with L601 rice has caused in 2007 throughout the food chain are estimated between 741 Million und 1.285 Billion US \$. Source: NEAL BLUE, E. (2007): Risky Business. Economic and regulatory impacts from the unintended release of genetically engineered rice varieties into the rice merchandising system of the US. Greenpeace International (Amsterdam).
<http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/international/press/reports/risky-business.pdf>
 - In 2007, the disqualification of his harvest for sale on the organic market forced organic farmer Felipe Agustín Esteve to sell in the conventional market at 10 cents/kg less, and he lost the organic farming subsidy (CAP) of €300 per hectare. Source: Testimonies of Contamination, published by Greenpeace 2009:
<http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/international/press/reports/testimonies-of-contamination.pdf>
 - Already between 1998 and 2006, 9 organic maize contamination cases have been report by 3 different EU organic certification bodies in Navarra, Aragón and Cataluña. Source: Bello A; Porcuna JL; González V; Fabeiro C. 2007. Organic Farming integrity in maize cultivation in Spain. In: Stein AJ & Rodríguez-Cerezo E (2007). Third International Conference on Coexistence between Genetically Modified (GM) and non-GM based Agricultural Supply Chains. Seville 20-21st of November 2007 (Book of abstracts) 373-374pp. Edited by IPTS-JRC European Commission;
http://www.agroecologia.net/recursos/posicionamientos/transgenicos/034-Bello-Organic_as1.pdf
- (3) IFOAM EU Group calls for a moratorium on the cultivation of GMO (see: Malta declaration http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/around_world/eu_group-new/workareas/policy/pdf/100319-Malta-GMfree-declarationFINAL.pdf)