

EU ministers back GMO-free zones

Long-term environmental risk assessment of GMOs should be improved and member states allowed establishing GMO-free zones, EU ministers agreed last week.

On 4th of December, the bloc's environment ministers concluded a six-month process launched by the French EU Presidency aimed at overcoming the Council's inability to take authorisation decisions on new GM products for cultivation in the EU.

- It is not yet clear whether the conclusions of the exercise will actually help to break the current deadlock. Nevertheless, ministers agreed to:
- Improve evaluation of the medium and long-term environmental impacts of GM crops, in particular of pesticide-producing and herbicide-resistant GM crops;
- launch a joint European Commission and member-state reflection group in 2009 to define and consider socio-economic implications of placing GMOs on the market (such as cost-benefit analysis of the possible consequences of the entry of GMO seeds into the overall agricultural system);
- improve the use of member-state experts in the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) safety evaluation of GMOs;
- fix Community thresholds for the presence of GMOs in conventional seeds;
- protect, on a case-by-case basis, sensitive and protected areas by establishing GMO-free zones.

Read more at:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/cap/eu-ministers-back-gmo-free-zones/article-177557>

Where Could GM Ingredients Be Hiding?

a. Soya or maize (=corn) products that have not been guaranteed to be non-GM. These could include: Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP), Hydrolysed Vegetable Protein, Tofu, Miso, Tempeh, Soya sauce, Polenta, Tortilla chips and flours and meals made from soya or maize.

b. Derivatives of soya, maize (=corn), cotton or oilseed rape that have not been guaranteed to be non-GM [Derivatives affected include some of the following: "vegetable oil", soya derivatives such as soya oil (eg as a carrier for vitamins A,D,E), soya starch, soya fibre, lecithin (E322) and vitamin E (d alpha tocopherol); maize derivatives such as corn oil, cornstarch, modified starch, starch-based granulation additives, corn syrup, xanthan gum and some brands of dextrose, glucose, dextrins, maltodextrins, sorbitol and ascorbic acid (=vitamin C) and some coating agents or carriers for vitamins, colours and flavours; cotton derivatives such as cottonseed oil; oilseed rape derivatives such as canola (=rapeseed oil)].

c. Honey or honey products that may come from hives within six miles of a GM crop or test site [Honey products include honey, propolis, beeswax, royal jelly and pollen]

d. GM micro-organisms or their products [GM micro-organisms include some bacteria, brewers yeasts and bakers yeasts. Products of GM bacteria include riboflavin (=vitamin b2), aspartame (Equal/Nutrasweet), possibly amino acids such as tryptophan and some of the following enzymes that are used as processing aids (these may not be mentioned on lists of ingredients): alpha-Acetolactate decarboxylase, alpha-Amylase, Catalase, Chymosin A, Chymosin B, Cyclodextrin-glucosyl transferase, beta-Glucanase, Glucose isomerase, Glucose oxidase, Hemicellulase (xylanase), Lipase, triacylglycerol, Maltogenic amylase, Pectinesterase, Protease and Pullulanase. Products of GM yeasts include some yeast extracts, alcohol and fermented products.

f. Products of GM-fed or treated animals. [Such products include meat, gelatin, bonemeal, milk, whey cheese, butter, eggs and albumen from animals raised on feed containing GM ingredients or injected with GM growth hormones such as BST (rBGH)]

Read more at: <http://www.geneticfoodalert.supanet.com/ingred.htm#CTOP>

10 reasons why we don't need GM foods

With the cost of food recently skyrocketing – hitting not just shoppers but the poor and hungry in the developing world – genetically modified (GM) foods are once again being promoted as the way to feed the world. But this is little short of a confidence trick. Far from needing more GM foods, there are urgent reasons why we need to ban them altogether.



1. GM foods won't solve the food crisis

A 2008 World Bank report concluded that increased biofuel production is the major cause of the increase in food prices. GM giant Monsanto has been at the heart of the lobbying for biofuels (crops grown for fuel rather than food) — while profiting enormously from the resulting food crisis and using it as a PR opportunity to promote GM foods!

“The climate crisis was used to boost biofuels, helping to create the food crisis; and now the food crisis is being used to revive the fortunes of the GM industry.” — Daniel Howden, Africa correspondent of The Independent.

“The cynic in me thinks that they're just using the current food crisis and the fuel crisis as a springboard to push GM crops back on to the public agenda. I understand why they're doing it, but the danger is that if they're making these claims about GM crops solving the problem of drought or feeding the world, that's bullshit.” — Prof Denis Murphy, head of biotechnology at the University of Glamorgan in Wales.

2. GM crops do not increase yield potential

Despite the promises, GM has not increased the yield potential of any commercialised crops. In fact, studies show that the most widely grown GM crop, GM soya, has suffered reduced yields.

“Let's be clear. As of this year [2008], there are no commercialized GM crops that inherently increase yield. Similarly, there are no GM crops on the market that were engineered to resist drought, reduce fertilizer pollution or save soil. Not one.” — Dr Doug Gurian-Sherman, former biotech specialist for the US Environmental Protection Agency and former advisor on GM to the US Food and Drug Administration.

3. GM crops increase pesticide use

Official data shows that in the US, GM crops have produced an overall average increase, not decrease, in pesticide use compared to conventional crops.

“The promise was that you could use less chemicals and produce a greater yield. But let me tell you none of this is true.” — Bill Christison, President of the US National Family Farm Coalition.

4. There are better ways to feed the world

A major recent UN/World Bank-sponsored report compiled by 400 scientists, and endorsed by 58 countries, concluded that GM crops have little to offer global agriculture and the challenges of poverty, hunger, and climate change, because better alternatives are available.

5. Other farm technologies are more successful

Integrated Pest Management and other innovative low-input or organic methods of controlling pests and boosting yields have proven highly effective, particularly in the developing world. Other plant breeding technologies, such as Marker Assisted Selection (non-GM genetic mapping), are widely expected to boost global agricultural productivity more effectively and safely than GM.

“The quiet revolution is happening in gene mapping, helping us understand crops better. That is up and running and could have a far greater impact on agriculture [than GM].” — Prof John Snape, head of the department of crop genetics, John Innes Centre.

6. GM foods have not been shown to be safe to eat

Genetic modification is a crude and imprecise way of incorporating foreign genetic material (e.g. from viruses, bacteria) into crops, with unpredictable consequences. The resulting GM foods have undergone little rigorous and no long-term safety testing, but animal feeding tests have shown worrying health effects. Only one study has been published on the direct effects on humans of eating a GM food. It found unexpected effects on gut bacteria, but was never followed up.

“We are confronted with the most powerful technology the world has ever known, and it is being rapidly deployed with almost no thought whatsoever to its consequences.” — Dr Suzanne Wuerthele, US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) toxicologist

7. Stealth GMOs in animal feed — without consumers' consent

Meat, eggs and dairy products from animals raised on the millions of tons of GM feed imported into Europe do not have to be labelled. Studies have shown that if GM crops are fed to animals, GM material can appear in the resulting products. As GM foods have been shown to affect animals' health, eating such “stealth GMOs” may affect the health of consumers.

8. No one is monitoring the impact of GM foods on health

It is claimed that Americans have eaten GM foods for years with no ill effects. But these foods are unlabeled in the US and no one has monitored the consequences. With other novel foods like trans fats, it has taken decades to realize that they have caused millions of premature deaths.

9. GM and non-GM cannot co-exist

GM contamination of conventional and organic food is increasing. An unapproved GM rice that was grown for only one year in field trials was found to have extensively contaminated the US rice supply and seed stocks. In Canada, the organic oilseed rape industry has been destroyed by contamination from GM rape. In Spain, a study found that GM maize "has caused a drastic reduction in organic cultivations of this grain and is making their coexistence practically impossible".

The time has come to choose between a GM-based, or a non-GM-based, world food supply.

"If some people are allowed to choose to grow, sell and consume GM foods, soon nobody will be able to choose food, or a biosphere, free of GM. It's a one way choice, like the introduction of rabbits or cane toads to Australia; once it's made, it can't be reversed." — Roger Levett, specialist in sustainable development.

10. We can't trust GM companies

The big biotech firms pushing their GM foods have a terrible history of toxic contamination and public deception. GM is attractive to them because it gives them patents that allow monopoly control over the world's food supply. They have taken to harassing and intimidating farmers for the "crime" of saving patented seed or "stealing" patented genes — even if those genes got into the farmer's fields through accidental contamination by wind or insects.

"Farmers are being sued for having GMOs on their property that they did not buy, do not want, will not use and cannot sell." — Tom Wiley, North Dakota farmer.

Read more at:

<http://www.bangmfood.org/publications/4-short-leaflets/33-10-reasons-why-we-dont-need-gm-foods>



Center for environmental research and information

Eco-sense

11 October 125/12

1000 Skopje, Macedonia

www.ekosvest.com.mk

info@ekosvest.com.mk