

### GMO Free Regions in Europe on the rise

GMO-free regions are on the rise as 22 EU member states and 6 non-EU countries are now home to publically declared GMO-free areas. The organizers of the 5<sup>th</sup> European Conference of GMO-free Regions, starting today in Lucern, Switzerland, announced an increase to 196 GMO-free European regions compared to 167 in 2007. Sub-regional and local government increases in the GMO-free areas were also reported on the Network's website with GMO-free provinces, prefectures and departments rising from 53 to 93 and GMO-free local governments adding 289 to their numbers swelling from 4.278 to 4.567. Membership in the Network of GMO free regional governments also increased from 42 to 49 in 8 countries. GMO free regions at all these different levels are defined as elected political entities which have adopted a decision to keep their territory free of cultivation of genetically modified plants, irrespective of the legal authority they have over this issue. In addition, 30.370 individual farmers and landowners are now committed to keeping their fields GMO-free compared to 27.100 in 2007.

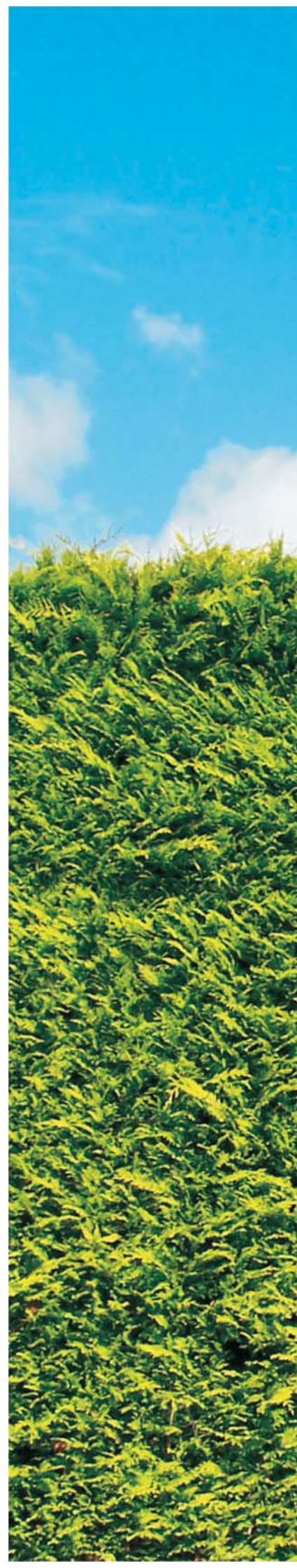
In areas where no maize is grown commercially, the number of GMO-free regions remains small: for example, just one in Sweden and Norway and few in Finland. According to the GMO industry, GM maize (MON810, the only GM crop presently available for cultivation within the EU) was grown on approximately 107,700 hectares in Spain, Czech Republic, Portugal, Germany, Romania, Poland and Slovakia (2007: 110.000). This represents less than 0,1 percent of the total area of maize grown in Europe and is expected to further decline in 2009. 75 percent of GMOs were grown in Spain. Resistance is, however, growing. Between April 2007 and April 2009, the number GMO-free zones established in Spain was raised from 5 to 94.

At present, there is no legal European framework for establishing GMO-free regions. However, the European Union's concept to centrally approve cultivation of GMOs throughout its territory has been a failure. Austria, Hungary, France, Greece and most recently Luxembourg and Germany enacted national bans under the safeguard clause (Article 23) of the European GMO Directive 2001/18. The clause allows provisional restriction or prohibition of the use of a specific GMO if new information indicates that the GMO constitutes a risk to human health or the environment. Attempts of the EU Commission to force the waiving of national bans were boldly rejected by two-thirds majority votes of all Member States.

A high resolution map and full list of GMO Free Regions in Europe is available at [www.gmo-free-regions.org](http://www.gmo-free-regions.org)

### 5th European Conference on GMO-free Regions, Biodiversity and Rural Development

At the 5th European Conference on GMO-Free Regions "Food & Democracy" in Lucerne (Switzerland) from 24th to 25th April 2009 216 representatives from 39 European countries were welcomed by the Speaker of the Swiss national Parliament, the ministers of agriculture of Austria, Scotland and the Czech republic, which presently holds the EU presidency as well as the president of Swiss farmers and many other representatives. More than 216 participants from 39 countries joined



interesting discussions on topics such as:

- strategies to facilitate citizen participate in European decision-making
- solutions for sustainable agriculture
- moratoriums on GMOs in other European countries.

At the end of the conference all participants made a call for a European GMO moratorium.

Read the call for GMO moratorium at:

[http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/fileadmin/\\_temp\\_/luzern\\_final\\_declaration\\_en.pdf](http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/fileadmin/_temp_/luzern_final_declaration_en.pdf)

### **Monsanto seeks end to German GMO maize ban for '09 crop**

Reuters, Wednesday April 22 2009

Monsanto, the world's biggest seed company, said on Wednesday it hoped legal action to end Germany's ban on growing its genetically modified (GMO) maize would allow the variety to be sown for the 2009 harvest. On Tuesday, Monsanto said it had started legal action against the decision on April 14 by German Agriculture Minister Ilse Aigner to ban cultivation and sale of Monsanto's MON 810 GMO maize which stopped it being sown for this year's harvest. Monsanto hoped a court decision would be available by mid-May which would permit the maize to be sown for this year's harvest, a Monsanto spokesman said. An application for an urgent hearing had been made in a German district court. German maize is planted in April and May. The company would contest the ban because it believed the decision damaged its legal rights as the European Union had approved the maize as safe, he said. Aigner had said she decided to issue the ban as information showed there was a justifiable reason to believe GMO maize presented a danger to the environment. Such decisions must be based on new scientific information, the Monsanto spokesman said: "The explanation that we received from the BVL (German federal food safety agency) last Friday contains no new scientific findings and the study that the BVL puts forward has already been examined by the European Food Safety Authority and other agencies," he said. The EFSA is the EU risk assessment agency for food and animal feed safety. A spokesperson for Germany's Agriculture Ministry said: "We have taken note of this lawsuit, which is not a surprise." The ministry would not make detailed comment on legal cases. The ban put Germany alongside France, Austria, Hungary, Greece and Luxembourg, which also banned MON 810 maize despite its approval by the EU as safe for commercial use in the bloc. The EU Commission, the bloc's executive arm, has tried without success to get the bans in other countries lifted. German farmers have registered intentions to cultivate some 3,300 hectares of maize for the 2009 harvest, up from 3,100 hectares in 2008. But the total is an insignificant part of Germany's annual maize crop of around 1.8 to 2.0 million hectares. (Reporting by Michael Hogan; Editing by Peter Blackburn)

Read more at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/feedarticle/8467513>



Center for environmental research and information Eco-sense

11 Oktomvri 125/12

1000 Skopje, Macedonia

[www.ekosvest.com.mk](http://www.ekosvest.com.mk)

[info@ekosvest.com.mk](mailto:info@ekosvest.com.mk)