

PRESS RELEASE

## Member States still reject GMO cultivation

Brussels, 27 March 2017 - Today, for the second time this year a majority of Member States voted against (1) the authorizations of two new GM crops and the licence renewal of the only GM crop currently approved for cultivation in the EU (2). The organic farming movement calls on the European Commission to withdraw these proposals.

Eduardo Cuoco, IFOAM EU Director, said: "Today's vote shows once again that a majority of national governments does not support GMO cultivation in the EU. With the Member States and the European Parliament (3) not backing up the GMO authorization and with many European citizens expressing their skepticism towards GMOs, it is evident that the Commission's proposal should be instantly withdrawn."

Eric Gall, IFOAM EU Deputy Director and Policy Manager, said: "The strong growth of the organic market is a clear indication of the direction European citizens want agriculture to go. European agriculture benefits from its GMO-free status and it does not need GM crops, the cultivation of which will only create problems and additional costs for conventional and organic farmers. Authorizing products already banned in 17 Member States makes little sense and will certainly not make the Commission more relevant to European citizens."

In case the European Commission decides to ignore today's vote, put the 'no opinion' excuse on the table again and go ahead with the authorization it'll be yet another sign that European procedures for GMO authorization need to be reformed. In that respect, IFOAM EU and other NGOs ask for a requirement to reach the qualified majority (4) for approval of a product or process falling under the EU's general food law regulation, otherwise such a proposal should be withdrawn (5).

The European Commission's final decision will have an impact on the organic and conventional GMO-free sectors. GMO cultivation heightens the risk of contamination of organic crops and increases costs for those farmers who want their crops to remain non-GMO. GMOs are not compatible with the principles of organic farming and are banned in organic production. They also increase the use of chemical herbicides which are forbidden in organic farming.

*Ends.*

### Notes for Editors:

(1) Results of the vote

a. On renewal of GM maize MON 810

8 Member States voted in favour, representing 34.45% of the EU population: CZ, EE, ES, NL, RO, FI, SE, UK.

6 Member States abstained, representing 22.26% of the EU population: BE, DE, HR, MT, PT, SK

14 Member states voted to reject, representing 43.29% of the EU population: BG, DK, IE, EL, FR, CY, LV, LU, HU, AT, PL, SI, IT, LT 14

b. On authorization of GM maize 1507

6 Member States voted in favour, representing 30.45% of the EU population: EE, ES, NL, RO, FI, UK

6 Member States abstained, representing 22.28% of the EU population: BE, CZ, DE, HR, MT, SK

16 Member states voted to reject, representing 47.27% of the EU population: BG, DK, IE, EL, FR, CY, LV, LU, HU, AT, PL, SI, SE, IT, LT, PT

c. On authorization of GM maize Bt 11

6 Member States voted in favour, representing 30.45% of the EU population: EE, ES, NL, RO, FI, UK

6 Member States abstained, representing 22.28% of the EU population: BE, CZ, DE, HR, MT, SK

16 Member states voted to reject, representing 47.27% of the EU population: BG, DK, IE, EL, FR, CY, LV, LU, HU, AT, PL, SI, SE, IT, LT, PT 47,27%

- (2) The European Commission proposes clearance for cultivation of two new maize varieties: GM Bt11 and GM 1507 and licence renewal for GM maize MON810. They all produce insecticide proteins, and Bt11 and 1507 are also tolerant to herbicides (gluphosinate).
- (3) In October 2016, the European Parliament adopted Resolutions against the authorizations of these three GMOs:
  - a. Maize Bt11
  - b. Maize 1507
  - c. Maize MON810
- (4) A qualified majority is reached when 55% of Member States vote in favor or against, representing at least 65% of the total EU population. Member States can only approve or reject a European Commission's proposal if a qualified majority is reached in favor or against, which has never happened with GMO authorization proposals.
- (5) Open Letter to Commission President Juncker on Improving EU decision-making in the area of health and consumer protection signed by Greenpeace European Unit, Friends of the Earth Europe, Health & Environment Alliance (HEAL), IFOAM EU and Pesticide Action Network Europe

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IFOAM EU represents more than 180 member organizations in the EU-28, the EU accession countries and EFTA. Member organizations span the entire organic food chain and beyond: from farmers and processors organisations, retailers, certifiers, consultants, traders and researchers to environmental and consumer advocacy bodies.