

PRESS RELEASE

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TO VOTE ON NATIONAL GMO BANS

Brussels, 12 January 2015 – Tomorrow the European Parliament will vote on a directive that will provide Member States with new mechanisms to ban GMO cultivation on their territory. The text of the directive is the result of the agreement reached between the European Parliament and the Council on 4 December.

“The organic sector welcomes the right of Member States to ban GMO cultivation but regrets that governments unwilling to ban GM crops will not be obliged to protect GMO-free farming from contamination” said IFOAM EU Director, Marco Schlüter. He further stated: “The organic sector is GM-free and it should remain this way. Organic food and farming provides environmental, economic and social benefits and in the context of increasing demand for organic products by consumers, Member States should secure the integrity of organic and non-GM food and farming by banning GMO cultivation. Cultivation of GMOs is already rendering organic production impossible in some areas and making it more costly overall. Any increase would only aggravate the situation further.”

“This directive will not change the situation in countries unwilling to ban GM crops. Organic and other GM-free farmers will still face the threat of contamination and the costs linked to it.” said IFOAM EU Policy Manager, Eric Gall. “We regret that the Council missed the opportunity to take a step forward in the protection of the GM-free food and farming sector by refusing to include mandatory measures to prevent contamination and a liability regime. Furthermore, this new directive cannot be a substitute for the necessary improvement of the EU risk assessment and authorisation process.”

Background:

In 2012, 11.2 million hectares were farmed organically in Europe and organic retail sales reached 22.7 billion euros. Experts estimate the market will double by 2020. Even though EU regulation 837/2009 for organic food and farming does not allow the use of GMOs, the organic sector already faces higher costs due to GM contamination in the fields and throughout the supply chain. As a result of GM contamination, organic farmers risk losing their organic certification and premium prices. Non-GM conventional farmers are facing similar problems of increased costs due to GM contamination.

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IFOAM EU represents more than 160 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.