

PRESS RELEASE

MEPs confirm that environmental concerns can justify GMO bans, Commission and Council must follow

Brussels, 11 November 2014 – The organic food and farming movement congratulates the European Parliament for its vote to strengthen national bans on GMOs and urges the Council and Commission to follow suit in the upcoming negotiations.

“National GMO bans will only stand challenges if the new directive includes solid legal grounds, such as the environmental grounds included in the Parliament position. Member States must be able to ban GMOs due to the environmental and economic harm caused by their cultivation in their territories, as legally sound bans are the only way to effectively preserve biodiversity and to protect organic and non-GM food and farming from contamination in the long term,” said IFOAM EU Director Marco Schlüter.

“National governments should not allow GMO cultivation to jeopardize the benefits that organic farming provides to the environment and to the European economy,” continued Eric Gall, IFOAM EU Policy Manager. “In the upcoming negotiations, the Commission must join the Parliament in recognising Member States’ rights and Member States should acknowledge that a lasting solution can only come from bans based on solid legal grounds.”

Background – Numerous cases of contamination have shown that the cultivation of GMOs inevitably leads to the contamination of organic and conventional GM-free agriculture, at all the stages of the production chain. Starting at the beginning, no farmer located next to another farmer cultivating GM crops of a similar variety can ensure his/her own produce is GM-free. In some regions of Europe, it is currently impossible to ensure certain crops are GM-free. Next, the same infrastructure is often used for storage and transport, further increasing the risk of contamination. Lastly, contamination can occur during processing in factories. The potential for contamination currently forces farmers and processors to take technical measures to protect themselves from contamination and to conduct substantive testing, which bear high costs. These costs must be borne by companies selling and growing GMOs – the ones gain from its cultivation.

The best guarantee against contamination is to ban GMO cultivation. Countries allowing GMO cultivation, such as Spain, should be obliged by EU law to adopt “coexistence” measures as a minimum requirement to at least give farmers and food processors a chance to prevent and mitigate contamination: polluters must pay and the victims must be compensated adequately through national liability rules. Viable liability rules for GM contamination are already in place in Austria and Germany.

For more information please contact
Laura Ullmann, Communications Manager
+ 32 (0) 486 88 52 12 - laura.ullmann@ifoam-eu.org
www.ifoam-eu.org

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