

Juncker plan could break promise on democratisation of EU GM crop decisions

Brussels, 8 April 2015 - A new plan by the European Commission to review the way decisions are made on genetically modified (GM) crops could break a promise by its president, Jean-Claude Juncker, to make the EU system more democratic. In a letter released today [1], NGOs and organic farmers warn that the plan, due to be released next week, would mean the Commission could continue to authorise GM crops despite the opposition of a majority of national governments, the European Parliament and public opinion.

In a speech at the European Parliament on 15 July 2014, Juncker pledged that the Commission would reform the GM crop authorisation system. He said that he *“would not want the Commission to be able to take a decision when a majority of Member States has not encouraged it to do so”* [2].

However, the plan could allow the Commission to open the EU market to GM crops, including in the context of trade negotiations with the US. US authorities are pressing the Commission to wave through 17 GM crops that are pending approval for import into the EU.

Under the new Commission plan, EU countries would be granted a theoretical right to opt out of GM crop imports that are authorised at the EU level, but it is unclear how these exemptions would hold up to EU common market rules or international trade agreements.

GM crops are virtually absent from food products in Europe, due to strong public opposition and EU labelling rules. But they are used to feed farm animals due to a loophole in labelling regulations.

Greenpeace EU director Jorgo Riss said: *“Juncker promised he would reform EU GM crop decisions to make them more democratic. Instead, he could end up approving more GM crops under the banner of free trade, brushing aside the concerns of EU citizens and risks for the environment.”*

IFOAM EU director Marco Schlüter said: *“The promise from Mr Juncker to European citizens to make GM crop decisions more democratic should not be turned into a bad Commission proposal that will not satisfy anybody in the food and farming sector. Mr Juncker should fix the EU approval system like he promised, instead of shirking this responsibility by putting the ball in the member states' court. GM crop authorisations jeopardise the welfare of organic and other producers providing the GM-free food that European consumers want. GM crops should not be allowed to disrupt organic - the European food market's top performer, both in terms of growth and environmental benefits.”*

Friends of the Earth Europe director Magda Stoczkiewicz said: *“In light of the ongoing trade talks with the US, European citizens need reassuring that the Juncker Commission isn't about to sneak genetically modified foods onto their plates. The way the EU assesses the safety of biotech foods is too weak and needs strengthening to make it more democratic, giving better protection to citizens and the environment.”*

Note:

[1] [http://www.ifoam-](http://www.ifoam-eu.org/sites/default/files/20150408_letter_president_juncker_gmo_review.pdf)

[eu.org/sites/default/files/20150408_letter_president_juncker_gmo_review.pdf](http://www.ifoam-eu.org/sites/default/files/20150408_letter_president_juncker_gmo_review.pdf)

[2] Jean Claude Juncker (15 July 2014), *A new start for Europe: My agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change*, speech given at the Plenary Session of the European Parliament,

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