



Subject: Environment Committee debate on Wednesday 3 September on the cultivation of genetically modified crops

Dear Ms. Ries,

We are writing to you in advance of the Environment Committee debate on Wednesday 3 September on the directive (2010/0208 (COD)) which is supposed to allow member states to decide for themselves whether they wish to ban the cultivation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) on their territory.

The European Parliament will be discussing the position recently adopted by the Council, which in our view grants excessive influence to the few multinational companies producing GM crops, while ignoring the interests of EU citizens and farmers. If left un-amended, the Council proposal will lead to less scrutiny on the health and environmental impacts of GMOs and will not provide member states with legally solid reasons to justify national restrictions of GM cultivation, allowing biotech companies to easily challenge national bans in court. **We support strong legal rights for countries or regions to ban GM crops, and for a comprehensive safety regime at the EU level.**

We therefore appeal to the European Parliament to continue supporting its first reading position¹ adopted in July 2011 and in particular to:

- strengthen the legal basis of the law, in order to strengthen potential national measures restricting the cultivation of GMOs. Governments deserve solid legal protection. This means allowing EU countries to ban GM cultivation also on environmental grounds, to avoid problems related to the development of herbicide resistant weeds, to prevent negative effects of GMO cultivation on animals and plants, or in cases where adequate data on the impacts of GMOs in a specific natural environment are missing or not adequate.
- remove any formal role of biotech companies that have vested interests in selling GM crops from the decision-making process to restrict the national use of GMOs. Sovereign states should have the right to prevent the release of GMOs on their territories and should not need the permission of the very companies that seek to profit from GM cultivation. Their involvement would set a dangerous precedent for EU environmental policy.
- reject the two-year limitation to the member states' right to ban. Governments must be allowed to decide whether or not to restrict the cultivation of a GM crop in their territory independently of whether two years passed from the authorisation of the GM crop at EU level.

¹ European Parliament legislative resolution of 5 July 2011 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2001/18/EC as regards the possibility for the Member States to restrict or prohibit the cultivation of GMOs in their territory (COM(2010)0375 – C7-0178/2010 – 2010/0208(COD)), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2011-0314+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

We look forward to your continued support for legislation that protects the environment, leads to a more sustainable food and farming system in Europe and respects the wishes of the majority of EU citizens.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require further information.

Yours sincerely,

Marco Contiero, EU Policy Director on Agriculture, Greenpeace European Unit

Faustine Defossez, Senior Policy Officer, European Environmental Bureau

Marc Fichers, Secrétaire general, Nature & Progrès Belgique

Nina Holland, Agribusiness Campaigner, Corporate Europe Observatory

Marta Messa, Policy Officer, Slow Food

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Marco Schlüter, Director, IFOAM EU group