

Commission proposals on GMO cultivation bans fail to solve problems of GMO-free food sector

Brussels, 13/07/2010 – Today the Commission published a proposal that gives member states more possibilities to ban GMO cultivation on their territory – but clearly this is an attempt of the Barroso Commission to persuade member states to facilitate and accept GMO authorisations.

“Whereas some work has been done to improve the texts in the last weeks, these proposals are **no adequate response to the contamination problems** the European food sector is already facing today,” comments *Christopher Stopes*, President of the IFOAM EU Group¹. “On the contrary, with this proposal Commission President Barroso wants to satisfy critical Member States and aims to further accelerate GMO approvals. If this strategy were to succeed, the GMO free food sector would have to struggle even more with GMO contamination problems.”

“Especially in Spain, many farmers had to give up growing maize as they could not deliver the GMO free quality anymore,” adds *Victor Gonzalez*, Spanish Board Member of the IFOAM EU Group. “Huge **economic damage** has been reported throughout the food chain related to GMO contamination², but also related to the prevention of contamination, which still has to be paid by those who want to remain GMO-free. The present proposal enables **voluntary measures in some Member States only**, but does not provide a solution for the GMO free food sector throughout the EU. Europe-wide, legally binding rules that effectively prevent contamination, and the implementation of ‘the polluter pays’ principle for GMOs must be established to relieve the organic and conventional GMO-free sector of this economic burden.”

“President Barroso has always shown himself to be in favour of faster GMO approvals - despite the fact that the majority of EU citizens reject GMOs on their plates and on their farms, so they clearly reject GMO releases into the environment”, criticises *John Portelli*, Maltese Board Member of the IFOAM EU Group. “With these proposals, the Commissioner in charge, Mr. Dalli, serves Barroso’s wish to ‘break the deadlock’ over GMOs. We are in favour of strengthening the right of Member States to stay GMO free– but not at the expense of more GMO approvals and not with complete disregard of cross-border contamination problems. Member States must take their citizens seriously and must finally insist to base all EU decisions regarding GMOs on **precaution**³, prevention of contamination and care for health and environment.”

More information:

IFOAM EU Group, phone + 32-2-280 12 23, Fax: +32-2-735 73 81,
info@ifoam-eu.org, www.ifoam-eu.org

NOTES:

- (1) The **IFOAM EU Group** represents more than 300 member organisations of IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) in the EU-27, the EU accession countries and EFTA. Member organisations include: consumer, farmer and processor associations; research, education and advisory organisations; certification bodies and commercial organic companies.
- (2) Publications about **economic costs of GMO** contamination and prevention in the food sector:
 - Economic impacts of labelling thresholds for the adventitious presence of genetically engineered organisms in conventional and organic seed, study published by IFOAM EU Group 2009:
http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/around_world/eu_group-new/positions/publications/pdf/IFOAMEU_GMO-freeSeedStudy.pdf
 - Schadensbericht Gentechnik, Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft (Hrsg.) 2009:
http://www.boelw.de/uploads/media/BOELW_Schadensbericht_Gentechnik090318.pdf
 - Testimonies of Contamination, published by Greenpeace 2009:
<http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/international/press/reports/testimonies-of-contamination.pdf>
 - Bello A; Porcuna JL; González V; Fabeiro C. 2007. Organic Farming integrity in maize cultivation in Spain. In: Stein AJ & Rodríguez-Cerezo E (2007). Third International Conference on Coexistence between Genetically Modified (GM) and non-GM based Agricultural Supply Chains. Seville 20-21st of November 2007 (Book of abstracts) 373-374pp. Edited by IPTS-JRC European Commission
- (3) The IFOAM EU Group has outlined more specific demands with its Malta Declaration, see: http://www.ifoam-eu.org/news/pdf/IFOAMEU_GMfree_MaltaDeclaration_22.10.2010.pdf