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GMO cultivation

Lack of support from Member States means Commission must withdraw its proposals

Today, the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed, voted on draft regulations for the cultivation in the EU of two GM maize varieties (Bt11 and 1507) and the renewal of one further variety (Mon 810). Had the committee, which is composed of experts from each Member State, voted in favour, these would have been the first GM plants authorised for cultivation in the EU in almost 20 years (with the exception of the very short-lived Amflora potato).



Not only did no qualified majority of Member States support these texts, but not even a simple majority could be reached. While the European Parliament made its view on the matter very clear by objecting to these three authorization proposals back at the beginning of October, the Member States were unable to give any direction, leaving the Commission with the choice of pushing the text onwards to the appeal committee, amending it, or withdrawing it.

Green environment and food safety spokesperson **Bart Staes** stated: "*This is a clear disavowal of the Commission proposals, but also a sign that Member States are not taking their responsibilities seriously when it comes to GMOs. Several Member States banning GM maize on their own territory abstained during the vote (as Germany) or voted in favour (as italy), showing a remarkable lack of consistency.*"

At the beginning of the year, Jean-Claude Juncker reiterated his previous declaration concerning the undemocratic aspects of such procedures. When the Member States fail to give direction, the Commission

is left to decide alone. This happens often in votes concerning pesticides or GMO authorisations, as was shown by a Commission report from February 2016. It is expected that the Commission may propose a draft text aiming to correct this problem next month.

"*We are talking of cultivating new GMOs in our soils - this is not a harmless decision. Coherence between words and actions should dictate that the Commission withdraw these drafts either completely or until a new procedure is put in place.*" added Bart Staes.

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