chuttersnap

en | nl

News | 29.03.2017

GM maize for cultivation

The Commission must accept the appeal committee's vote and refuse new authorizations

With a clear majority of Member States voting against the cultivation of three GM maize varieties within the EU on Monday 27 March, it should now be clear to the European Commission that it is time to withdraw its proposals. But is the Commission paying attention?

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are one of the issues where the EU's non-transparent process called 'comitology' (see our article) repeatedly leads to deadlock. The almost systematic abstention of some member states during these votes, coupled with the incapacity of the Commission to convince EU countries of the merits of its draft authorizations on new GMOs, frequently leads to 'no opinion' conclusions.

This is one of the main reasons that led the European Commission to propose a reform of the system, repeatedly referred to as "un-democratic" by President Juncker, in February this year.

In the meantime, the Commission has continued to table draft proposals for the authorization of new GM plants - either for cultivation in the EU or for import. In fact, these have been pouring down on the Member States' tables over the last few months, while the texts are still being decided on via the 'old' un-democratic rules.

The very last vote on GMOs (27 March) in the appeal committee was an important one, as it could have led to the first authorization of new GM crops for cultivation in the EU in 18 years[1]. Three GM maize varieties were under discussion: Bt11 from Syngenta and 1507 from Dupont for their first authorization for use in EU fields, and Mon810 from Monsanto for a renewal.

Though no qualified majority was reached in favour or against, there was a clear disavowal of the Commission drafts, with **16 Member states** opposing maize Bt11 and 1507, and **only 6 member states** voting in favour (with 14 against and 8 in favour of maize Mon 810).

This does not come as a surprise considering that 17 EU countries have already banned all GM maize from

their own territories. The vote also comes after an objection was voted by a large majority in the European Parliament in October, on an issue where the majority of citizens are clearly sceptical[2].

And yet, the authorization process is carried out in such a way that the Commission may well decide to go through with the authorizations, using EFSA's positive opinion to back it up. If it comes to that, though, how will we answer the Eurosceptics accusing the EU of bowing down to big corporations and disregarding the opinion of its own citizens?

The EU Commission also argues that, thanks to the so-called opt-out regulation, each Member State can now ban the GM maize varieties from their own territory. But are we really now authorizing products refused by the vast majority to please only a handful of EU countries? And do we really hope that the pollen, pesticides and polluted water that accompanies these crops will stop at national borders?

If the Commission wants to respect the regulation which clearly states that decisions should not be taken against a "predominant position", and at the same time maintain a minimum level of credibility around the GMO approval procedure, then it must be brave.

It must face the result of this vote in the only respectable way: by withdrawing its drafts and refusing to authorize these three GM maize varieties for cultivation. This is a decision that would lead to a historical result - no GM crops would be cultivated in the EU from next year on.

---

[1] Except the short lived GM potato Amflora

[2] the Eurobarometer of 2010 shows that 61% of EU citizens do not support GMOs in fields and food

Recommended

Opinion

© Christian Kaufmann



[Healthy food starts with healthy farming. Europe must …]

04.11.2026

Opinion

Environment Protection Authority Victoria (CC BY 4.0)



[PFAS in Wine, Water & Makeup: How We Can Ban Forever C…]

18.06.2025

Press release

ricardo-gomez-angel



[Greens/EFA welcome Commission's Strategic Dialogue con…]

04.09.2024

Publication

© Christian Kaufmann



Eating Greens

11.04.2024

Contact person



Juliette Leroux

Advisor on Agriculture and Rural Development

Please share

- E-Mail