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News | 13.06.2012

GMO Campaign Blog

Letter to Commissioner Dalli: No speed up of new GMO approvals

Despite the Danish Presidency's efforts to sway some countries towards its compromise proposal allowing more freedom for Member States to prevent the growing on their territory of a GMO crop that is allowed at the EU level (see our previous blog post), the Council has been forced to realise there is still a blocking minority against the proposal. France, UK, Germany and Belgium had indicated in a previous meeting (June 7th) that they were not ready to move, pushing Denmark to take the vote on the proposal out of the agenda of the last Environment Council (June 11th) and to acknowledge that it failed. It is highly unlikely that the Cyprus Presidency will now take it over, so the proposal can be considered dead.



The Greens/EFA group has already stated it was against this proposal, as it gave undue power to private companies to negotiate directly with Member States' governments, but fear that Commissioner Dalli will use the rejection of the proposal to speed up approvals of new GMOs (more specifically 6 varieties of GMO maize) and the renewal of the authorisation of MON810 for commercial growing in the EU. This could happen already at the next Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health meeting, in July. This would be a shocking development as the Commission is relying on the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) positive opinion to propose to authorise a GMO at the EU level. EFSA, the agency in charge of assessing a GMO's safety, is riddled with huge problems of credibility: its scientific independence has been questioned after its chairman, Ms Banati, was shown to have strong links with the industry lobby group ILSI and there have been numerous examples of conflicts of interest of the scientists on different scientific panels of EFSA with industry. The doubts about EFSA's integrity have pushed the EP to vote against granting EFSA 2010 discharge, for the first time in its history. This is a very strong political sign from the EP that the credibility of EFSA is at an all time low and needs to be restored. The granting of the discharge has been postponed until October, and it is hoped that EFSA will seriously

address the problems of its ties with industry before then. In the meantime, all GMO risk assessments that have been performed by EFSA must be considered suspect of undue industry influence and should be reviewed by truly independent scientists. As Commissioner Dalli has already threatened Member States that he would resume authorising new GMOs for commercial growing if no agreement on the "renationalisation" proposal is reached, the Greens/EFA group wrote to him yesterday to urge him not to proceed with new authorisations. This would only jeopardise public confidence and trust in the scientific assessment agencies and the Commission itself, and increase public protests and rejection of GMOs. The group will denounce any attempt to impose GMOs that have not been tested reliably on behalf of EU citizens. The responsibility of the Commission to ensure the highest possible level of health and environmental safety cannot be jeopardised by the agrochemical industry.

- Letter to Commissioner Dalli (.pdf)

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