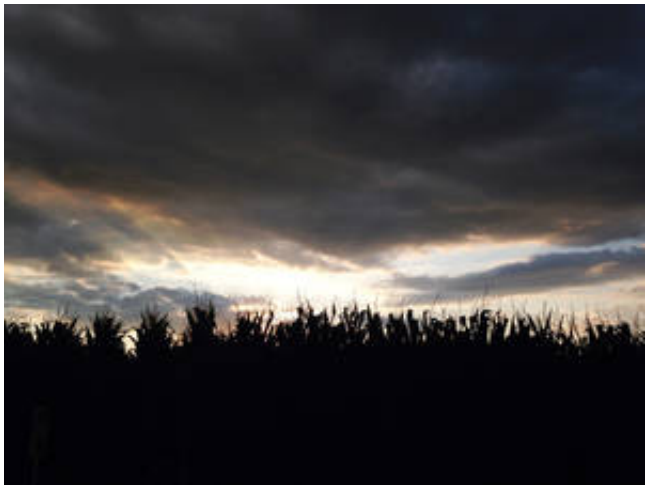
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GMO-free EU under threat

Misleading proposal from Greek Presidency agreed in Coreper



Permanent representatives of Member States agreed today on a misleading proposal from the Greek Presidency that pretends to give Member States more freedom to ban GMOs on their territory. With a very weak premise and legal grounds, the proposal may in fact be instrumental allowing numerous new GMO crops for cultivation in the EU when it claims that Member States would ban GMOs more easily than under current legislation. Indeed, the Presidency proposal contains numerous problems: It does not make any mention of the necessity for improving the risk assessment of GMOs, as well as the authorisation procedure, which should be a prerequisite for any discussion on the possibility for Member States to refuse the cultivation of GMOs, as shown by the recent authorisation of a poorly assessed GMO maize (TC 1507 from Pioneer) against the opposition of a record majority of 19 Member States and a 2/3 majority in the European Parliament. It allows for exorbitant power to be given to the biotechnology industry as governments that wish to ban the cultivation of a GMO on their territory will be obliged to negotiate it with the applying company. Only when the company does not agree to the demand to ban the GMO on the territory of a Member State, the Member State may adopt measures to ban a GMO, provided that such measures do not conflict with the conclusions of the risk assessment of the GMO, i.e. are not scientifically based, but relate to issues such as town and country planning, land use, socioeconomic impacts, etc. These reasons a Member State may use in justifying its decision to ban a GMO would have no legal weight in commercial business agreements coming before the WTO or even EU laws. The major questions around cross-border contamination and cross-border responsibility in case of genetic pollution are not referred to in this proposal. If GMOs are authorised on a wider scale, no Member State would be exempt from genetic contamination. The whole proposal seems to stem from a plot from the Commission to unblock the EU

deadlock on GMO crops, which would allow more cultivation of GMO crops. It is not surprising that the proposal shows up each time a new authorisation is granted by the Commission. It was first introduced when the Commission allowed the Amflora potato (now forbidden by a decision from the European Court of Justice), and it is coming again now when the Commission is ready to allow GMO maize 1507. Environment Ministers can still reject this proposal at their environment council on the 12th of June. Failing to do so would make them responsible for the invasion of GMO crops in the EU and the end of a GMO-free Europe. The Greens are calling on all Environment Ministers to stop this proposal when the EU is still relatively spared from GMO crops.

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