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Move along, nothing to see

EFSA's opinion on new toxicological study of GMOs



EFSA just released its initial review on the recently published scientific article by Séralini et al on the toxicity of Monsanto's genetically modified NK603 maize and the associated herbicide, Round-up that found significantly increased rates of cancer and death in rats fed both the GMO maize and the herbicide. This research, the first of its kind carried out for 2 years on rats, has triggered a flood of vociferous criticisms from known pro-GMO scientists and biotech companies. National safety agencies in various countries and EFSA have been assigned to review the paper (although it has been published in a respected peer reviewed journal). No surprise: the EFSA opinion, published on 4th October but without any clearly identified author, trashes Séralini et al's work. The criticism of the study seems no more than a "cut and paste" from the biotech industry arguments. The conclusion does not even acknowledge the need for long term feeding studies that the study clearly demonstrates. Let's be reminded that since its creation, EFSA has been riddled with its scientists' and administrators' conflicts of interest and accused of being infiltrated by the food and agrochemical industry lobby ILSI (International Life Sciences Institute) in assessing GMOs and designing the guidelines for assessing them. Recently, for the first time in its history, EFSA has not been granted its budgetary discharge because of these conflicts of interest. EFSA has systematically given positive opinions on all GMOs that it had to assess. One could not expect EFSA's scientists questioning and criticising their previous work by admitting some value in Séralini's study. In the meantime, between a new frightening study on potential health impacts of GMOs and its dismissal by non independent scientists, the lack of public confidence in our expertise systems and in GMOs won't be allayed. We would have liked the same level of scrutiny for industry studies on which EFSA relies to bless GMOs, and for which data is not available to the public and instead is hidden as confidential business

information, as for this study. If it had been the case, probably no GMO would have been authorised. But on the contrary, EFSA has repeatedly been complacent with industry's poor data and methods. The Greens/EFA group wants new studies on long term health impacts of GMOs, with previously agreed protocols including critical scientists. All industry data that has been used in assessing GMOs must immediately be made public, in order to allow for a clearly independent review. And given the potential consequences for public health that Séralini's study uncovered, it is necessary to put an immediate halt to all GMO authorisations for growing or imports.

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Opinion

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