Press release | 06.09.2011

ECJ ruling on GMOs

Court ruling on GM contamination blows hole in the myth of coexistence

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) today issued a groundbreaking ruling in a case concerning the contamination of honey with pollen from genetically modified crops (1). The court ruled that honey contaminated by pollen from a GM maize variety (MON810) cannot be sold on the market, as this maize has not been specifically authorised in honey. The case concerns German beekeepers, whose honey was contaminated by pollen from GM maize during field trials of GM maize from Monsanto. The Greens welcomed the ruling, which directly challenges the abandonment of the policy of zero tolerance for GMOs that have not been authorised in the EU (2). Commenting on the ruling Green MEP **José Bové** said:

"This case is proof that coexistence is a fallacy and that GM cultivation does not leave a choice for GM-free products. Permitting the cultivation of GM crops clearly leads to the contamination of non-GM crops and other foodstuffs like honey. Beekeepers are powerless to prevent the contamination of their honey by GM pollen, as farmers are for their crops, and thus powerless to prevent the tainting of the foodstuffs they produce and the integrity of their product. The only sure way to prevent this is by precluding the cultivation of GMOs."

Green MEP **Bart Staes** added:

"The biotech lobby always talks of freedom of choice, the question is freedom for whom? This ruling clearly underlines the need for EU regulation that would protect farmers, food producers and consumers against the contamination of their products from GM cultivation. Zero tolerance must mean just that: traces of GMOs, no matter how small, cannot be tolerated (2). The European Commission should revise its GM legislation to take account of the interests of consumers and food producers, and not the biotech industry.

"Beekeepers in the EU need their honey to be as high quality as possible, so they have an economic interest that GMOs and other kinds of contamination do not end up as traces in their honey. Today's outcome could have far-reaching implications for the honey market, with EU countries importing honey from GM producing countries and two of the main EU honey-producing member states (Spain and Romania) having authorised the production of this GM maize. Clearly, EU beekeepers should not be held responsible for the negative implications of the contamination of their honey."

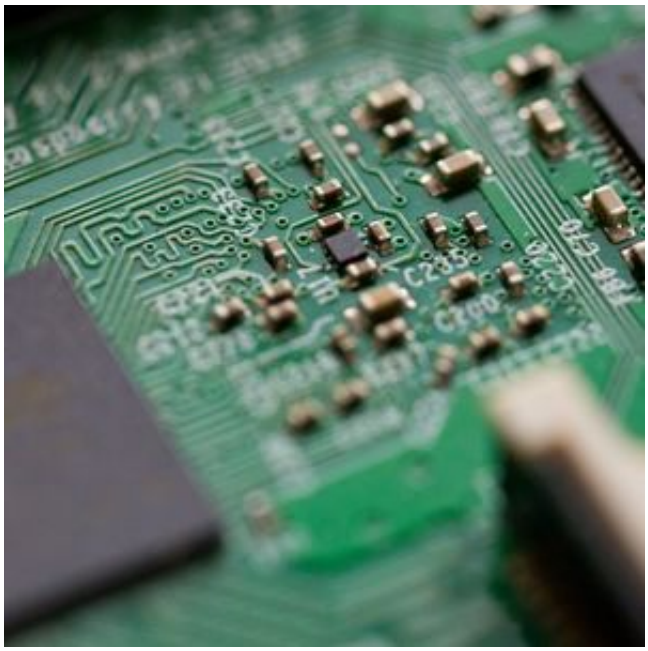
(1) ECJ file available at
http://curia.europa.eu/jurisp/cgi-bin/form.pl?lang=FR&Submit=Submit&numaff=C-442/09

(2) Recently adopted EU legislation on animal feed permitted traces of unapproved GMOs despite the absence of a full safety review.

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José Bové

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