Press release | 29.09.2010

EFSA and GMOs

Green MEP José Bové calls for resignation of EFSA chairman Banati over links to food industry

French Green MEP **José Bové** has called for the resignation of the chair of the board of European Food Safety Agency (EFSA), Diana Banati, over a conflict of interest scandal. At a press conference yesterday, José Bové outlined the details of Ms Banati's extensive links to the food industry, which completely undermine the need for independence at the EFSA. Among its other roles, the EFSA is responsible for assessing genetically modified organisms as part of the EU approval process, for which it has been frequently criticised. The revelations about EFSA chair Banati clearly raise further fundamental concerns about the agency's role in GM approvals*.

According to the information uncovered by José Bové, Ms Banati was a member of the board of the International Life Science Institute, an organisation representing a myriad of businesses, including Monsanto, Syngenta, Dupont, Nestlé and Kraft, among others, which has a history of lobbying for the interests of the food industry.

At the press conference, Green MEP **José Bové**, who is also vice-president of the EP's agriculture committee, said:

"Given the highly sensitive nature of the European Food Safety Authority's work, notably in the EU's GM authorisation process, the need for the independence of its staff is crystal clear. That the chair of the EFSA board should have such direct links to the food industry is a clear conflict of interest and completely unacceptable. Ms Banati's continuation as chair of the EFSA is no longer tenable and her resignation should be tendered immediately.

"The Commission should never have approved her appointment given her clear links to the food industry, which is completely at odds with the need for independence at the EFSA. However, it is equally concerning that the Commission has failed to respond to the concerns that about Ms Banati's independence that I raised with the responsible commissioner John Dalli in July of this year.

"There can be no alternative but to replace Ms Banati as chair of the EFSA. However, this scandal raises further doubts about the EFSA and its work. The Greens believe that any authorisations of GMOs that have taken place during her tenure must be annulled. Clearly though, a moratorium on GMOs is the only solution that will truly address the very real concerns with GM held by the majority of EU citizens."

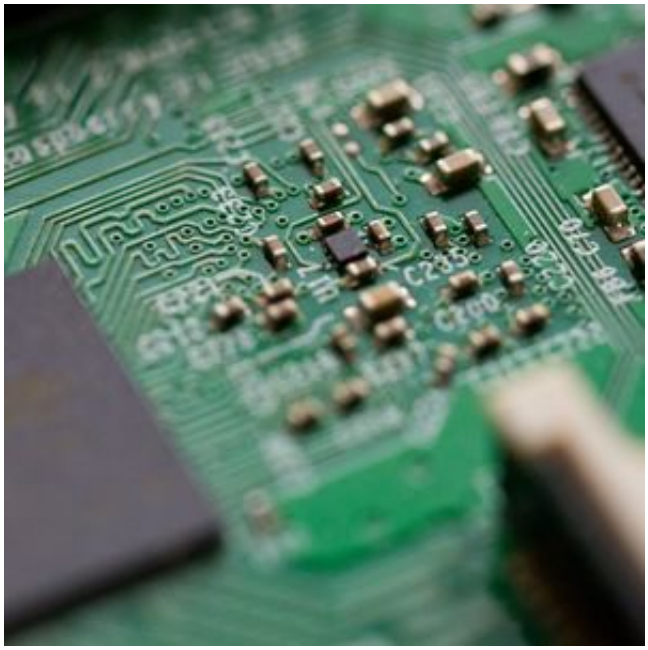
* In December 2008, the European Commission was charged by member state governments to revise the procedure for GMO approvals and to propose a reform of EFSA. EFSA has already faced one conflict of interest controversy, with the revolving door case of Suzy Renckens who this year moved from EFSA to

food industry giant Syngenta. These latest concerns with Diana Banati further underline the need for fundamental reform of EFSA and completely call into question its independence.

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