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GMO authorisation

Deal avoids worst but fails to provide full certainty for those wanting to say no to GMOs in Europe

An agreement on a proposed new scheme for the authorisation of genetically-modified organisms in the EU was reached last night in negotiations between the European Parliament and EU governments in Council. Commenting on the deal, Green food safety spokesperson **Bart Staes** said:

“This deal has avoided the worst but leaves too many gaps, which could undermine the hand of those wanting to say 'no' to GMOs. Shifting to a 'renationalisation' of decisions on GMO cultivation must be accompanied by a totally legally watertight basis for those countries wishing to opt out, otherwise it risks being a Trojan horse. This agreement will fail to provide this certainty and, as such, risks being a slippery slope for easing EU GMO authorisations. More importantly, it fails to really change the fundamentally flawed EU approval process in itself.

"While the overall thrust goes in the wrong direction, the worst has been avoided and some of the major problematic provisions originally demanded by EU governments have been improved in the final agreement. Importantly, countries wanting to opt-out of GMO authorisations will not be forced to first ask companies not to include them in their authorisation applications but have the option to do so if they want. While the deal strengthens the basis on which member states can ban GMOs after their authorisation and allows them some flexibility to use environmental policy objectives as a justification, in addition to the criteria assessed by the European Food Safety Authority, it is not clear if this will provide true legal certainty. The agreement would fail to ensure there are meaningful mandatory measures to prevent the contamination of non-GM crops, with the myriad of issues this raises for growers wanting to remain GM-free.

"There is definitely a need to reform the EU's GMO authorisation process: we cannot persist with the current situation by which authorisations proceed in spite of flawed risk assessments and the consistent opposition of a majority of EU member states in Council and, importantly, a clear majority of EU citizens. However, the answer of this cannot be a trade-off of easier EU authorisations against easier national bans. This deal risks finally opening the door to genetically-modified organisms across Europe, in spite of citizens' clear opposition to GMOs."

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Opinion

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Responsible MEPs



Bart Staes

Member

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