Press release | 13.07.2010

GMO cultivation

Commission proposes a dangerous deal

The European Commission today has presented two documents ostensibly aimed at giving the Member States more autonomy to restrict the cultivation of GMOs. In exchange, the Commission expects the Member States to support authorisations of new GM-varieties.

Commenting on the Commission's proposal, **Martin Häusling MEP,** Green Coordinator of the Agriculture Committee, said:

"We strongly reject this dubious deal! The Commission has not been able to overcome the opposition of the member states to GMOs over the years and wants now to trick them into accepting quicker authorisations. This is a dangerous bargain: within the internal market, GM seeds and products will circulate freely. Contamination does not stop at borders. The latest seed contaminations in Germany, who has banned the cultivation of GM-maize, should have been a warning signal.

This deal has serious pitfalls. The proposals do nothing to protect organic and conventional farmers in countries that allow the cultivation of GMOs. In an initial impact assessment, the Commission has clearly acknowledged that the proposals could lead to negative impacts for non-GM farmers in some countries. Instead of going for grubby deals, the Commission should ensure that strict coexistence measures are implemented in all Member States.

Satu Hassi MEP, Green Coordinator of the Environment Committee added:

"The proposals presented today do not give legal guarantees to the Member States. As EU-wide authorisation is maintained, countries which want to ban GMOs will be confronted with lawsuits by Biotech companies.

"In December 2008, the Environment Council asked for an improvement of the risk assessment, especially with regard to long-term effects, and the consideration of socio-economic effects in the authorisation procedure. Nothing has happened so far and the new Commission proposals do not meet these demands either.

"We need a moratorium on any new GMO-approvals until existing legislation is properly implemented: Risk assessment must be improved so as to exclude dangers for human health and the environment. Measures to avoid contaminations must be implemented EU-wide. Strict liability rules must ensure that the users of GMOs pay for all damages and testing costs."

Josè Bové MEP, Vice-Chair of the Agriculture Committee, said:

"At this time, what Europe needs at the international level is more cohesion, not less. This proposal from commissioner Dalli adds only a dose of chaos. Europe cannot afford to be divided on this issue at the WTO.

"Last week, the Greens presented a report which analyses the draft guidelines for the environmental risk assessment of genetically engineered plants that have been drawn up by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and are currently under discussion. The report shows the EFSA's risk assessment is seriously flawed, (1)"

Note to editors:

1) Report can be found at:

http://www.greens-efa.eu/cms/topics/dokbin/347/347268.environmental_risk_assessment_of_genetic@en.pdf

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Opinion

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José Bové

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Martin Häusling

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