

GM-free labelling regime in Austria: background, status quo, visions

Dr. Eva Claudia Lang

Austrian Federal Ministry of Health, Dep. II/B/15

„How GMO-free labelling of food products can contribute
to increase GMO-free supplies for animal feed“

6th March 2013, EP, Brussels

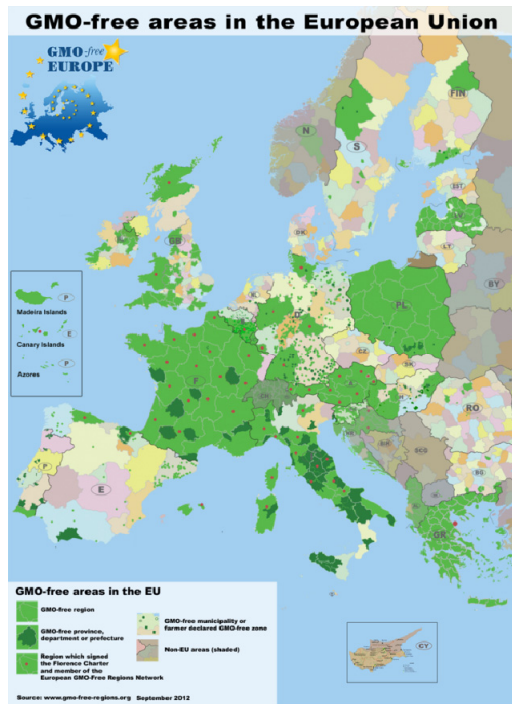
Overview

- History
- GM-free labelling regime in Austria
- GM-free production in Austria
- Future aspects

History

- 1995 – Austria joined the EU, Austrian Gene-Technology Act was set into force, implementing relevant EU-Directives
- 1996 first deliberate release notifications in AT
- huge public awareness and protest against it
- 1997 referendum against GM-use in food & feed, signed by 1.2 million people in AT → amendment of Gene-Technology-Act!
- 1998 implementation of GM-free labelling-regime as Codex Alimentarius Austriacus Guideline!

GMO-free regions



Source (2012) : <http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/gmo-free-regions/maps.html>

- ENV-Council Conclusions 2008:
“... GMO-free zones can be created on the basis of voluntary agreement which, in line with relevant national law,...”
- Total AT-Territory declared as GMO-free in cultivation, also based on many regional initiatives like “Bodensee-Akademie” , “Xundheitswelt“ in Lower-Austria, Alpe-Adria-Region

GM-free labelling regime in Austria

- 1997 foundation of association „ARGE Gentechnik-frei“, an alliance of food- & feed producers, trading-companies, NGOs & associations, aiming at implementing GMO-free production and –labelling in AT (<http://www.gentechnikfrei.at/>) – first initiative, other followed
- Federal Ministry of Health implemented in 1998 „soft-law“ Guideline acc. to Codex Alimentarius Austriacus, continuously updated! (http://www.bmg.gv.at/cms/home/attachments/3/6/0/CH1252/CMS1228301104683/gentechnikfrei_rl_16.1.13.pdf)
- Regulates strictly cultivation, production process and control standards



Source: www.gentechnikfrei.at



Source: <http://www.zurueckzumursprung.at/>

GM-free labelling regime in Austria – agricultural aspects

- Usage of GMOs, GM-ingredients and –additives is forbidden
- Whole farm has to be managed according to recommendations of GM-free production (exception: strict local and temporal segregation to conventional production)
- GM-free food has to be produced from ingredients of agricultural origin
- Animals have to be fed as soon as possible after birth (e.g. after colostrum) according to the recommendations of Codex Guideline (exemptions for new farms, which do have animals that can not fullfill the standard (valid up to 2017))



GM-free labelling regime in Austria – production & labelling

- If some components necessary for production (enzymes, flavours, amino acids, vitamins) are not continuously available according to GM-free standards (e.g. phytase, lysine, alpha-amylase), exemptions are possible.
- Contamination with GMOs:
 - legal provisions: EU Regulation on organic production ((EC) No 834/2007) & EU Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 → 0,9% threshold
 - in practice: **0,1 % and below** (near zero-tolerance) on voluntary basis
- Labelling of GM-free produced food: „without GMO“, „produced GMO-free“, or else
- Labelling of GM-free produced feed: „suitable for production of GM-free food“
- Labelling principles comparable to food law

GM-free labelling regime in Austria – independent control of GM-free production

- GM-free production is inspected by independent control institutions on a regular basis
- Control-mechanism: „process-oriented“, the whole production chain is checked („from the seed and stable to the table“)
- Analytical control up to handling, packaging and labelling
- Control institution have to be accredited acc. to Codex GM-free Guideline and EN 45011 (standard) by BMWFJ



Source: © Walter Mayer (AGES Wien)

GM-free food- & feed production

- So far around 2000 guaranteed GM-free food-products on AT market
- Milk- & milk-products, eggs are already GM-free in AT
- most of poultry-production (chicken & turkey) is already GM-free in AT!
- Most of bread- and bakery-products, cerealia, soy-products are GM-free
- Next aim: GM-free pork-production, started in 2009 by local initiatives (e.g. „IBO-Schwein“)



Source:
<http://www.gentechnikfrei.at/start.asp?ID=438>



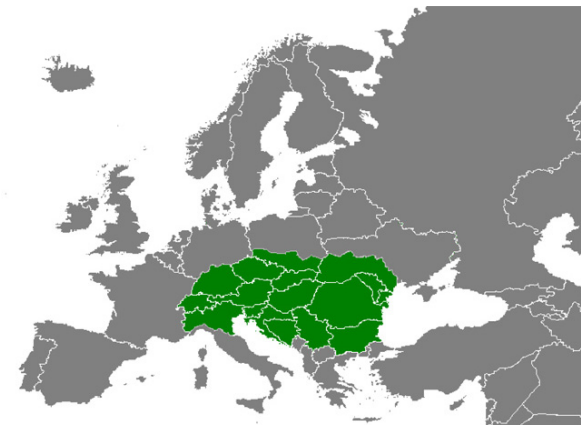
Source: <http://www.iboschwein.at/>

GM-free food- & feed production

- AT imports 600.000t soy/year for feed supply (incl. GM-soy)
- In AT soy cultivation areas are limited
- Limiting factor for GM-free meat-production: protein-supply
- 2012 new initiative: Association „Donau-Soja“, aiming at providing GM-free soy in the danube region in near future; (<http://www.donausoja.org/>)



Source: <http://www.donausoja.org/organisation>



Source: <http://www.donausoja.org/aufgaben>

Implementing an EU-wide harmonized „GM-free labelling regime“ I

- Problem: various countries implemented different GM-free standards, varying e.g. in number of considered production levels, thresholds of contamination, duration of transition periods for GM-free feeding, control standards
- ARGE-Gentechnikfrei and Federal Ministry of Health defined necessary requirements:
 - No useage of GM-products and/or ingredients
 - Consequent and consistent system on criteria of production, controls and labelling
 - Where ever possible: GM-free standards of EU Regulation on biological production (EU Reg. No 834/2007) and GM-free-production should be comparable

Implementing an EU-wide harmonized „GM-free labelling regime“ II

- Whole production chain of GM-free food and feed should be covered respectively documented: raw material, ingredients, additives but also fertilizers, pesticides
- GM-free feeding is mandatory (for new farms clear transition periods have to be defined)
- Mandatory controls in risk defined intervals and scales by external boards of control
- Possibility for exemptions, if some components necessary for production are not continuously available according to GM-free standards (e.g. phytase, lysine, alpha-amylase)
- The additional GM-free labelling of bio-products is regarded as consumer-friendly in AT and should be continued

Future aspects

- Looking forward to presentation of results of EC-wide questionnaire on GM-free production, expected for spring 2013!
- Guaranteed GM-free feed supply by initiatives „Brussels Soy Declaration“ (also signed by AT Ministers) or „Donau-Soja“-initiative
- New GM-free food production chains → meat!

Further information of the Federal Ministry of Health on GM-free production (in German)

[http://www.bmg.gv.at/home/Schwerpunkte/VerbraucherInnen/engesundheit/Lebensmittel/Oesterreichisches Lebensmittelbuch/Richtlinie zur Definition der Gentechnikfreien Produktion von Lebensmitteln und deren Kennzeichnung](http://www.bmg.gv.at/home/Schwerpunkte/VerbraucherInnen/engesundheit/Lebensmittel/Oesterreichisches_Lebensmittelbuch/Richtlinie_zur_Definition_der_Gentechnikfreien_Produktion_von_Lebensmitteln_und_deren_Kennzeichnung)

Thanks a lot for your attention!