



31.1.2015

## NOTICE TO MEMBERS

**Subject:** Petition No 2233/2013 by Joost Maas (German), on authorisation of genetically modified crops in the EU

### 1. Summary of petition

The petitioner states that most EU citizens are against the growing of genetically modified crops and products. He wonders, therefore, how it is possible that the growing of a number of modified maize varieties (e.g. SmartStax, Mon 810 and Pioneer Hi-bred 1507) has been permitted in the EU. Until recently, for example, Mon 810 was banned in the EU. Now pollen from it is spreading to plants and ending up in honey, which according to the petitioner is harmful. The petitioner calls on the European Parliament to ban genetically modified crops again. He considers that parliamentarians elected by citizens should abide by the will of the people. If they do not, people will lose confidence in democracy and will readily gain the impression that democracy is being undermined by corruption and lobbying.

### 2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 18 September 2014. Information requested from Commission under Rule 216(6).

### 3. Commission reply, received on 31 January 2015

The EU legislation provides for a well-defined regulatory framework on GMOs and particularly Directive 2001/18/EC<sup>1</sup> and Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003<sup>1</sup>. According to this

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2001/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 March 2001 on the deliberate

framework, which is recognised as being among the strictest worldwide, any GMO, before being placed on the EU market, has to undergo a case-by-case safety assessment of the highest possible standard in order to protect human and animal health and environment.

This risk assessment is performed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), a scientific agency independent of the Commission and established by Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002 of the European Parliament and the Council. A specific EFSA GMO Panel, a body composed of renowned independent scientists chosen for their competence in the relevant fields, is responsible for the evaluation. The Panel is assisted by ad hoc experts and its work is based on internationally agreed methods.

Until now, there is only one GM crop that is commercially cultivated in the EU: maize MON 810. The release into the environment of this GMO was authorised in 1998, after a thorough risk assessment demonstrating its safety, which was confirmed by subsequent assessments in particular as regards its pollen<sup>2</sup>.

With regard to the other GMO maize referred by the petitioner, SmartStax was authorised for food and feed uses in November 2013 but not for cultivation, and Pioneer Hi-Bred 1507 has not been authorised for cultivation yet.

Finally, with regard to the concerns expressed by the petitioner on the position of EU citizens with regard the growing of GM crops, the Commission is aware that cultivation of GM crops is a source of concerns in some Member States. This is why the Commission made in July 2010 a legislative proposal to allow Member States to better take into account their national context and the views of their citizens by giving them the possibility to restrict or ban the cultivation of GMOs on their territory for other reasons than risks to health and the environment<sup>3</sup>. The European Parliament adopted a first reading opinion on this proposal in July 2011. The Council agreed on a common position in June 2014. The European Parliament and the Council found an agreement in second reading in December 2014, which allow final adoption of the legislative proposal in January 2015. Therefore Member States will be able to use the provisions of this new legislation to restrict or ban the cultivation of GMOs in their territory in the course of 2015.

## Conclusion

The EU regulatory system for GMOs is considered as one of the strictest in the world as far as the approval of GMOs is concerned. The Commission is strongly committed to securing the right of the EU citizens to safety by ensuring that GMOs for food and feed uses are only authorised in the EU when they are not likely to have adverse effects on human and animal health or the environment, and that the risk assessment is performed according to highest scientific standards, and in full independence and transparency if the conditions are met.

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release into the environment of genetically modified organisms and repealing Council Directive 90/220/EEC, OJ L 106, 17.4.2001

<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2003 on genetically modified food and feed, OJ L 268, 18.10.2003

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/fr/efsajournal/pub/3022.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/gmo/legislation/docs/proposal\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/gmo/legislation/docs/proposal_en.pdf).