



Environment Committee backs flexibility for EU countries to ban GMO crops

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Press release

Long-awaited draft plans to allow EU member states to restrict, or ban, the cultivation of crops containing genetically modified organisms on their own territory even if it is allowed at EU level won the support of the Environment Committee on Tuesday. MEPs voted to remove the Council-backed idea of a phase of negotiations with the GMO company, and supported plans to allow member states to ban GMO crops on environmental grounds.

"This vote shows we have secured a broad consensus between the political groups in the European Parliament on this sensitive issue" said Frédérique Ries (ALDE, BE) who is steering the legislation through Parliament.

"The measures approved today will secure flexibility for member states to restrict, ban the cultivation of GMO crops if they so wish. At the same time, we have secured a clear process for the authorization of GMOs at EU level, with improved safeguards and a key role for the European Food Safety Authority, which is important for us" she added.

Risk assessment and management

The approved text would entitle member states to pass legally binding acts restricting or prohibiting the cultivation of GMO crops after they have been authorised at EU level. They could also ask, when a new GMO crop is being assessed at EU level, to adjust the geographical scope of the authorisation.

Bans could be founded upon, inter alia, the aims of environmental policy, town and country planning, land use, agricultural policy, public policy, or possible socio-economic impacts. Further possible grounds should include preventing GMO contamination of other products, persistent scientific uncertainty, the development of pesticide resistance amongst weeds and pests, invasiveness, the persistence of a GMO variety in the environment or a lack of data on the potential negative impacts of a variety, MEPs say.

Case-by-case risk assessments to be carried out by the European Food Safety Authority should take account of the direct, indirect, immediate, delayed and cumulative effects of GMOs on human health and the environment, and always take account of the precautionary principle, MEPs say.

Buffer zones

Member states should also ensure that GMO crops do not contaminate other products, and particular attention should be paid to preventing cross-border contamination, for instance by implementing "buffer zones" with neighbouring countries, MEPs say.

Next steps

The committee's second reading recommendation was approved by 53 votes to 11 with 2 abstentions. The committee also voted for the opening of negotiations (57 votes to 5 with 4 abstentions) with the Italian Presidency of the Council, which will start today.

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Press release

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