

GMO imports: MEPs object to draft law allowing national bans, call for plan B

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A draft EU law that would enable any member state to restrict or prohibit the use of EU-approved GMO food or feed on its territory was strongly opposed by MEPs from all political groups in a debate on Wednesday. Members were concerned that the draft did not include an impact assessment, that member state measures might not be compatible with single market or WTO rules and that the proposal might prove unworkable.

"There is a clear majority in the European Parliament against this proposal" said Environment Committee chair [Giovanni La Via](#) (EPP, IT), whose draft report recommends rejecting the draft legislation. "There is no impact assessment around this draft, and we believe that this was not the best proposal possible" he said.

"This proposal is in conflict with the principles of "better regulation" and transparency which the new European Commission has taken on (...) After so many years we have spent on getting rid of internal barriers, this proposal could fragment the internal market and lead to border inspections, and we all worked to get rid of those, back in the day"

"We don't see any legal certainty emerging from this proposal (...) it's all very vague" said [Guillaume Balas](#) (S&D, FR). Another point is the practicability of the proposal. There is also a serious problem with the notion of "use", which is a very imprecise term" he said.

"We voiced concerns over this proposal, on its incompatibility with the internal market and WTO rules" said [Mark Demesmaeker](#) (ECR, BE). "We also have serious doubts about the workability of the proposal (...) My group supports your report and your proposal to reject the Commission proposal" he told the rapporteur.

"We need a new proposal"

"Lots of terms used in the Commission proposal are legally undefined" said [Gesine Meissner](#) (ALDE, DE). "Too much is being left to chance, and this could be harmful to the internal market. The implementation of this proposal would be impossible. We should reject it, but if nothing follows from the Commission, this doesn't help to solve the problem. We must have a new, better proposal, or we could come up with a counter-proposal on our own" she said.

"I think that this is to ensure a quick and easy authorization procedure rather than truly addressing the problem" said [Lynn Boylan](#) (GUE/NGL, IE): "This proposal is a dishonest one, offers a false solution to a problem. I agree that we should reject this half-baked proposal from the European Commission which is totally flawed. We need to start again, to have a new text that would ensure that GMOs cannot be authorized when a majority of member states are against them"

"Maybe we have to congratulate the Commission on managing to unite Parliament" said [Bas Eickhout](#) (Greens/EFA, NL). "We are also very critical, maybe for other reasons than the rapporteur" (...) however, "If we reject the report, we should at least demand a new proposal (...) will the Commission come back with a new proposal based on the alternative scenarios you worked on?" he asked.

"This proposal just doesn't work" said [Eleonora Evi](#) (EFDD, IT) "I agree that if we reject this proposal, I would like the reassurance that a new one would be forthcoming. We don't just want to reject it and have this very important issue, which needs to be tackled, forgotten."

Press release

“Once again, subsidiarity has to be at the heart of the work that we do. We have to be extremely cautious” Said [Mireille D’Ornano](#) (ENF, FR)

“There is no plan B”

“I ask you to reconsider your position towards this proposal” said the European Commission representative Ladislav Miko. “Our Commissioner gave a very clear answer already: we don’t have any plan B for this proposal (...) If the proposal is rejected, we will stay in the current situation”. Mr Miko said that the flexible definition of the term “use” is intentional, in order to accommodate differing practices in the member states. He dismissed the alleged effects on the single market: “in the past, safety clauses were invoked several times, and this was never considered a problem for the internal market” he said.

Next steps

The Environment Committee will vote on the proposal on 12-13 October. The file will then be put to a vote by Parliament as a whole at the 26-29 October plenary session in Strasbourg.

Note to editors

On 22 April 2015, the Commission presented - together with a Communication "Reviewing the decision-making process on genetically modified organisms" - a proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 as regards the possibility for the member states to restrict or prohibit the use of genetically modified food and feed on their territory (COM(2015)177).

In its proposal, the Commission suggests to mirror, as regards genetically modified food and feed, the recent amendment of Directive 2001/18/EC in respect of GMOs intended for cultivation (Directive (EU) 2015/412 which entered into force in early April 2015). Accordingly, it proposes to allow member states to restrict or prohibit - under certain conditions - the use of genetically modified food and feed on their territory after these products have been authorised ("opt-out").

Further information

- Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/envi/home.html>

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