

New GMO legislation



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Current and future EU legislation regarding genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is of major interest to citizens writing to the European Parliament. They often express concerns about GMO crops and ask that the EU ensures environment and consumer protection.

The EU has one of the tightest genetically modified (GM) food regulations in the world and the cultivation of GM crops is only allowed following a thorough risk assessment. EU legislation foresees that no GMO can be cultivated in the EU if it has not received a prior authorisation, following an assessment which involves national evaluation agencies and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), in order to ensure safety for human and animal health and for the environment.

In line with this understanding, the European Parliament, a fierce defender of the EU's high environmental and consumer protection standards, adopted - on 13 January 2015 - new legislation allowing EU Member States to restrict or ban the cultivation of crops containing genetically modified organisms (GMOs) on their own territory, even if this is allowed at EU level.

As stated in the [Parliament's legislative resolution](#), Member States will be allowed to restrict or prohibit the growth of GMOs not only on environmental grounds that had not been assessed by EFSA but also on other grounds, such as town and country planning requirements, socio-economic impact, avoiding the unintended presence of GMOs in other products and farm policy objectives. Restrictions can also apply to groups of GMOs designated by crop or trait.

According to the text, Member States should also ensure that GMO crops do not contaminate other products, and particular attention should be paid to preventing cross-border contamination.

Additional information is available in the EP answer "[Towards new rules on GMO crops within the EU](#)", in the [Parliament press release of 13 January 2015](#) and in the analysis "[Member States' bans on GMO cultivation](#)", published on 5 January 2015 by the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS).

GMOs in the EU

Currently, only one GM crop - insect-resistant maize MON 810 from Monsanto - is grown in the EU. [According to the European Commission](#), in 2013 MON 810 maize was cultivated in five Member States (Spain, Portugal, Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia), with a total coverage of almost 150 000 hectares (of which 137 000 hectares in Spain).

Some countries - Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg and Poland - adopted safeguard clauses to prohibit its cultivation on their territories.

Towards the new legislation

Up until now, GMOs have been authorised at EU level on a case-by-case basis following an application by a company. The [authorisation process](#) was carried out by the EU, and the resulting decision applied to all EU countries.

The European Commission had proposed a change to the existing European GMO-legislation in July 2010 in response to a long standing request from several Member States, and in line with European citizens' growing concerns about GMOs as shown by European-level surveys.

The legislation, informally agreed by Parliament and Council in December 2014, had been deadlocked for four years due to disagreement between pro- and anti- GMO Member States.

The [new GMO legislation](#) which is expected to come into force in spring 2015 still needs to be approved officially by the Council.

Do you have any questions on this issue or another EP-related concern? Please use our [web form](#). You write, we answer.

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