



GMOs: Parliament backs national right to cultivation bans

Plenary sessions

EU Member States should have the flexibility to ban or restrict the cultivation of genetically modified crops and should be able to cite environmental motives for doing so, according to MEPs voting on draft legislation on Tuesday.

The draft amendment to existing legislation - adopted with 548 votes in favour, 84 against and 31 abstentions - will now go to the Council for further discussion. Parliament's rapporteur Corinne Lepage (ALDE, FR) commented: "I am pleased that the Parliament has reached an agreement on the difficult issue of GMOs, which has been an issue of public concern for years. If the Council manages to find a common position, this balanced agreement will allow countries and regions the right to not grow GMOs if they so choose."

Grounds to ban

The Commission had proposed to grant EU Member States the right to ban crops on all but health or environmental grounds, which were to be solely assessed by the European Food Safety Authority. Committed to ensuring a firmer legal basis in the context of international trade rules, Parliament insisted that Member States should not be prevented from stating additional environmental grounds. These could include pesticide resistance, biodiversity preservation or a lack of data on potential negative consequences to the environment.

Parliament also considered that socioeconomic impacts could provide legitimate grounds for a ban, e.g. where contamination risks to conventional or organic agriculture cannot practicably be managed.

The cost of contamination

MEPs say all Member States must take measures to prevent contamination of conventional or organic farming by GM crops, and ensure those responsible for such incidents can be held financially liable.

Updating EU safety checks

An EU-level safety check and authorisation will continue to be a precondition to a green light for growing GMOs. While the proposal does not affect this process, MEPs reminded the Commission that the guidelines need updating.

Only one strain of GM maize and one modified potato are currently authorised for cultivation in the EU and most Member States do not currently grow either crop commercially. Austria, France, Greece, Hungary, Germany and Luxembourg have activated a "safeguard clause" in the current (2001) EU Directive to expressly prohibit cultivation of certain GMOs.

Procedure: Co-decision (1st reading)

Contact :

Christopher COAKLEY
BXL: (+32) 2 28 44859

Press release

STR: (+33) 3 881 76853
PORT: (+32) 498 98 33 26
EMAIL: envi-press@europarl.europa.eu

Paola BUONADONNA

STR: (+33) 3 881 74822
PORT: (+44) 7 786 060 531
EMAIL: Press-en@europarl.europa.eu
EMAIL: paola.buonadonna@europarl.europa.eu
ADDINFO: (+44) 207 227 43 35

Eimear NÍ BHROIN

STR: (+33) 3 881 64122
PORT: (+353) 868 559 423
EMAIL: Press-en@europarl.europa.eu
EMAIL: eimear.nibhroin@europarl.europa.eu
ADDINFO: (+353) 1 605 79 32