

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0675/03
by Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Green gene technology - developing countries

In 1999 the German NGO 'Internationaler Landvolkdienst der Katholischen Landvolkbewegung' (International Rural Service of the Catholic Rural Movement – ILD) was asked to consider the extent to which green gene technology might help improve food security in developing countries. Together with other non-governmental organisations, the ILD held an international hearing and two international congresses to create a broad platform for a public debate with representatives from the world of science, industry and organisations working in the field of agricultural development. The ensuing publications provide a detailed picture of the various aspects of green gene technology and also demonstrate the great need for information among the various players. This applies in particular to the ILD's project partners in the developing countries concerned. In order to continue the debate at European level, the ILD submitted its first application for funding together with a French and a Belgian partner in 2000. This application was rejected on the grounds that, firstly, the French partner was not a purely development-oriented NGO and, secondly, the ILD's annual budget of around EUR 500 000 meant that it did not have the required financial capacity. The ILD then submitted a fresh application – taking account of the Commission's criticisms – in 2002, but this application was also refused, for reasons which had not been cited previously.

1. Why is nothing being done to promote a broad grass-roots debate on green gene technology, particularly given that none of the approved projects tackles this issue?
2. Once it has been initiated, how can the discussion process be continued in an efficient way?
3. Can the Commission envisage a better way of cooperating with applicants so that any uncertainties which emerge can be clarified from the outset and projects which have been approved in principle can also meet the Commission's requirements as regards form and content?
4. Is there a country-based key for the approval of projects? If so, what form does it take?
5. How many projects have been approved during the past two years (2001/2002), and for which Member States?