WRITTEN QUESTION P-0679/06
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to the Commission

Subject: Assessment of GMOs and GMO-free areas

Since the moratorium on GMOs was lifted in 2004, about 30 genetically modified organisms, mainly types of maize and colza, have been authorised in the European Union for marketing or processing for food. About 20 applications are currently awaiting authorisation. So far the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), when asked for its opinion, has always found in favour of authorisation, despite some Member States' authorities' unfavourable opinion of certain GMOs.

A major four-year British study on GMOs has shown that growing genetically engineered plants unquestionably leads to impoverishment of flora and fauna. Such a study gives rise to doubts about the validity of a coexistence policy and leads us back to the need for GMO-free areas in the EU, as requested by an Austrian province and rejected by the Commission.

In recent weeks some Member States have asked for stronger confidentiality provisions and thus for restriction of access to certain studies, particularly on toxicity. Following a ruling by a German court, a company was forced to publish studies that it had been refusing to release.

What measures is the Commission considering, and when, to allow the EFSA to take account of and implement supplementary studies by third organisations? In the seventh Framework Research and Development Programme, is the Commission considering measures to improve assessment of GMOs and to allow for projects to assess GMOs' impact on the environment and health?

Will the Commission put forward proposals on confidentiality, to clarify the provisions of Directive 2001/18/EC[1] in this area?

Finally, how does the Commission intend to take account of the request from European regions to be considered as GMO-free areas?

[1] OJ L 106, 17.4.2001, p. 1.