

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3533/07
by Bernadette Bourzai (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Implementing directives on marketing plants and seeds threatened by genetic erosion

I have been informed that the European Commission is about to adopt four implementing directives on a regulatory framework for marketing plants and seeds threatened by genetic erosion.

Producers of so-called farmers' seeds are extremely concerned by the content of these proposals as they feel that they are unsuitable for, and even counterproductive to, the conservation of plant genetic resources.

Instead of simplifying market access for small producers and farmers, it seems that these proposals set out a very restrictive regulatory framework for marketing the so-called conservation varieties:

- the production, marketing and use of conservation seeds must be limited to their region of origin. However, a large number of our agricultural varieties have a region of origin outside the EU;
- the permitted quantity of marketed conservation seeds would be limited to 0.5% of the quantity of seeds used for the corresponding species during one whole year in a Member State, or to the quantity of seeds necessary to plant 20 ha of that variety. These amounts are extremely small and will not be sufficient to ensure the daily, sustainable usage of these varieties threatened by genetic erosion, which is the only way of preventing their extinction;
- the many controls suggested in the Commission's proposals in relation to field production methods, quantities of marketed seeds, the surface area planted etc. would be costly and disproportionate to the economic importance of these conservation varieties.

Over and above the content of the directives, I wonder about the powers that the European Parliament could exercise over these texts, particularly in the framework of the new comitology procedure.

Are Directives 2002/53/EC¹ and 2002/55/EC², from which the implementing directives derive, subject to the extensive alignment exercise underway at the European Commission concerning the comitology procedure?

Can the European Parliament and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development exercise a right of scrutiny over these four implementing directives?

¹ OJ L 193, 20.7.2002 p.1.

² OJ L 193, 20.7.2002 p.33.