
Germany abstained in vote on import of new genetically engineered soybeans

Split vote: Majority of 15 countries to 12 countries against authorisation for import
Friday, 14 July 2017

In the vote on import approval for a new variety of genetically engineered soybeans in Brussels on 12 July, Germany was the only country which abstained. According to well informed experts, 15 countries – such as France, Italy, Poland and Austria – voted against the authorisation, 12 countries – such as UK and Spain – were in favour. Just a day before the vote, the Committee on the Environment of the EU Parliament demanded that the import and use of these soybeans in food and feed was rejected. Despite all concerns, the EU Commission is expected to approve the authorisation.

The soybeans (event DAS-68416-4) developed by the US company Dow can be sprayed with a combination of 2,4-D and glufosinate. During the approval process, the European Food Safety Authority EFSA neither investigated the residues from spraying nor any potential interactions even though these herbicides are thought to be damaging to health.

By abstaining, Germany paved the way for the EU Commission to approve the imports. This is a scenario that could soon be repeated: on 17 July, the EU Member States will again be deliberating on imports of further genetically engineered soybeans resistant to multiple herbicides. For the first time, this will be about the import of genetically engineered soybean varieties each resistant to three different herbicides. Amongst others, they will be voting on a soybean variety produced by Bayer that can be sprayed with a combination of the herbicides glyphosate, isoxaflutole and glufosinate.

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