

## EU Commission approves 'maize monster' for import

Risks to the immune system and combinatorial effects untested

Thursday, 3 January 2019

Just before Christmas, the EU Commission approved the import of a Bayer / Monsanto maize that produces six insecticidal Bt toxins. The decision was taken despite recent scientific findings indicating substantial risks to the immune system from Bt toxins. Furthermore, there may be risks to health from residues left from spraying the maize with large amounts of the herbicides glyphosate and glufosinate that the plants are resistant to. Combinatorial effects of the toxins together with the residues from spraying with herbicides remain untested.

"The EU Commission respects neither science nor the precautionary principle. There are substantial reasons to assume that consumption of the genetically engineered maize can lead to adverse effects on health," Christoph Then says for Testbiotech. "The decision could seriously undermine trust in the EU institutions involved."

This maize is similar to crop plants produced by Monsanto known as 'SmartStax', but it has a higher resistance to glyphosate. Consequently, the maize can be sprayed with higher doses of herbicide that can lead to a higher load of residues. According to reports from the European Food Safety (EFSA), the existing data are not sufficient to derive conclusions on the safety of these residues. Therefore, Testbiotech is demanding that the import of this maize is prohibited, especially without further data.

There are further reasons why the maize should not be allowed for import: just recently, Testbiotech provided the EU Commission with further material showing that EFSA had not correctly assessed the risks to the immune system from the ingestion of Bt toxins. Recent scientific research indicates that Bt toxins can trigger allergies and cause other immune responses.

Finally, EFSA and the EU Commission have completely ignored combinatorial effects of the insecticidal toxins and the residues from spraying, which can lead to much higher toxicity than is known from the single compounds.

Currently, Testbiotech is aiming to make more detailed investigations mandatory for genetically engineered plants in a case brought before the EU court (case C-82/17 P). Unfortunately, as stated by the Attorney General, the EU Court does not seem to be in a position to request a further, more detailed risk assessment. The final decision of the court is expected in 2019.

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**Further information:** [EFSA opinion on safety of the genetically engineered maize](#) [2]

[Testbiotech assessment of the EFSA opinion](#) [3]

[Report on scientific findings indicating risks to the immune system from Bt toxins](#) [4]

[Information about the court case C-82/17 P](#) [5]

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