Watch out for the toxic mix!

Just how risky are the toxic compounds in genetically engineered plants?
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Testbiotech is warning that toxic compounds found in genetically engineered plants are increasingly burdening the food chain. Particular reasons for concern are raised about residues from herbicides and insecticides. Though it is known that the amount of residues in the plants is increasing, there are hardly any controls and risk assessment is insufficient. The report was commissioned by Ulrike Hoefken, a Green Member of the German Parliament.

“The cultivation and processing of genetically engineered plants are exposing the environment to certain herbicides and insecticides as never before. These compounds, their metabolites, their additives and the resulting mixtures become a permanent part of the food chain. Negligence or failures in risk analysis can be hugely damaging to human health and the environment,” warns Christoph Then at Testbiotech.

In the case of herbicides like Roundup that contain glyphosate as the main active compound and are applied on genetically engineered plants, the German authorities have taken action to prevent risks to human health. Very often these herbicides are mixed with so called POEA, polyoxyethylene alkylamine, to make the herbicide glyphosate more efficient. Meanwhile POEA are now known to be more highly toxic than glyphosate. According to the German Federal Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL), POEA may be transferred to consumers from feed and animal-derived products. Therefore, German farmers have been advised not to use these herbicide sprays in the cultivation of plants used in feed production. However, there were no intensified controls or measures taken in regard to feed imports such as genetically engineered soy.
Ulrike Hoefken adds, “Previously unknown hazards to human health, animal welfare and the environment are lurking in the feed troughs of our farmers. The new report shows massive negative consequences resulting from genetically modified plants, and specifically from imported genetically engineered soybeans. As long as these risks are not eliminated, a ban on imported these soybeans should be considered.”

In the next few months, decisions are due to be made on several applications for market authorization. Amongst these is a genetically engineered maize capable of expressing six different insecticidal toxins, jointly produced by the US companies Monsanto and Dow AgroSciences. Additionally, there is an expectation that the authorities will prolong market authorization for genetically engineered Roundup ready soybeans (Monsanto). These plants are resistant to herbicides and regularly contain residues from spraying. Just recently, the EU Council of Ministers failed to reach a decision on the import of genetically engineered maize expressing three insecticides and having a tolerance to herbicides such as Roundup. It is expected that the EU Commission now will endorse the market authorization of this maize for use in food and feed.

Further recent reports on glyphosate and genetically engineered soy:

Mertens, M., Glyphosat und Agrogentechnik,
http://www.nabu.de/imperia/md/content/nabude/gentechnik/studien/nabu-gly... [1]

Antoniou, M., Brack, P., Carrasco, A., Fagan, J., Habib, M., Kageyama, P., Leifert, C., Nodari, R. O., Pen-
gue W. (2010) GM Soy: Sustainable? Responsible?
www.gmwatch.eu/?option=com_content&view=article&id=12479 [2]

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Further information: Link to the report (only available in German) [4]

Attachment	Size
Testbiotech_watch_out_toxic_mix_April_2011.pdf [5]	342.47 KB

Source URL:https://www.testbiotech.org/en/press-release/watch-out-toxic-mix

Links
[1] http://www.nabu.de/imperia/md/content/nabude/gentechnik/studien/nabu-glyphosat-agrogentechnik_fin.pdf [2] http://www.gmwatch.eu/?option=com_content&view=article&id=12479 [3] mailto:info@testbiotech.org [4] http://www.testbiotech.de/node/463 [5] https://www.testbiotech.org/sites/default/files/Testbiotech_watch_out_toxic_mix_April_2011.pdf