

Forward to the past

EFSA renews GMO Panel with old acquaintances

On 8 June, the European Food Safety Authority EFSA published the names of the new members joining its expert panels for the period up until 2018. One of the panels with new members is the Panel on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO Panel), which in recent years has been under significant public pressure because several of its members were shown to have links to organisations with close ties to industry, such as the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI).

It is therefore surprising that many former members of the above-mentioned GMO Panel have been reappointed after an absence of several years, especially because these same experts are the ones who contributed to the committee's industry-leaning reputation. Some of the experts are:

- Jeremy Sweet, who is active in various industry-related organisations, including the "International Society for Biosafety Research", which is close to the industry-funded think tank International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI);
- Howard Davies, who was involved in ILSI publications;
- Jean-Michel Wal, who also worked for ILSI.

The Belgian scientist Adinda De Schrijver, who has co-authored several ILSI publications, is one of the new panel members. Other newly appointed experts also appear to have conflicts of interest: One example is the French expert Fabien Nogue, who is involved in a patent on genetically modified plants.

EFSA guidance for avoiding conflicts of interest requires that any existing cooperation of its experts with institutions such as ILSI are taken into account. Experts can, however, become members of EFSA panels if their cooperation with ILSI has officially ended, even if they worked closely with ILSI for several years. ILSI is financed by the food industry and agrochemical corporates, biotech companies are also amongst its supporters.

An initial analysis of the new GMO panel shows that the selection of the newly appointed experts is not a step forward in strengthening its industry-independent expertise. In fact, all the data indicate that EFSA is still not prepared to address conflicts of interest in their expert committees.

Further information: [Testbiotech report regarding EU-project GRACE, ILSI and other industry organizations](#): [1]

[Corporate Europe Observatory \(CEO\) report on connections of EFSA expert to industry](#) [2]

[Testbiotech report on the influence of ILSI & Co on German authorities](#) [3]

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