
“Intentional ignorance” in EFSA environmental risk assessment

European Food Safety Authority in favour of releasing genetically engineered oilseed rape into the environment

7 September 2015 / As analysis of Testbiotech shows, European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is ignoring new findings on the persistence and invasiveness of oilseed rape. EFSA is just “cherry-picking” from scientific publications to defend its own opinion. A technical dossier recently prepared by Testbiotech provided new information to the EU Commission about a recent long-term study publication on feral oilseed rape populations in Scotland. The study comes to the conclusion that feral oilseed rape populations can persist and flower outside the range of cropped oilseed rape plants, and have become part of the native weed and wildflower community. There are also indications for the invasiveness of oilseed rape.

The EU Commission has been asking EFSA to assess the Testbiotech dossier. In August, EFSA published a lengthy report which has, however, failed to take the most relevant new information into account. EFSA remains in favour of granting authorisation for the import of herbicide resistant genetically engineered oilseed rape MON88302 produced by Monsanto, even though spillages of kernels from these imports are known to give rise to feral populations of genetically engineered plants. Similarly to Monsanto, EFSA argues that these plants will be not a problem because they will not persist over a longer period of time and will not spread into the environment. However, the publication from Scotland, as well as previous findings from Japan and the US, show that this assumption is not sufficiently based on facts but on selectively chosen and biased existing evidence.

This case has far reaching implications. EU regulation only allows releases of genetically engineered organisms after application and authorisation for a deliberate release and for a defined period of time. However, EFSA is of the opinion that in this case, an application for import can be extended to also allow a release of genetically engineered plants that will persist in the environment for an indefinite period of time without a full environmental risk assessment.

In June 2015, several organisations filed requests to review market authorisations for the import of the genetically engineered oilseed rape and forwarded the technical dossier of Testbiotech to the EU Commission which normally has 12 weeks to respond. Just recently the EU Commission announced it needs more time to make a decision.

Further information: [Testbiotech’s technical dossier on \(June 2015\)](#) [1]

[EFSA’s response to the technical dossier of Testbiotech \(August 2015\)](#) [2]

[Testbiotech’s analysis of EFSA’s response \(September 2015\)](#) [3]

[See also](#) [4]

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Links

[1] <http://www.testbiotech.org/node/1283> [2] <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/supporting/pub/864e> [3]

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