

Spanish government does not respond to the risk of massive transgenic contamination

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- The teosinte, which appeared in Spain in 2009, is a new alien species and a wild relative of maize. The European Commission is well aware of its presence in Spain.
- The appearance of teosinte is having serious consequences for agriculture. The situation could worsen if it crosses with genetically modified maize.

In a letter to civil society organisations (CSOs), the Spanish government states that they have, as yet, not taken any measures to prevent genetically engineered maize MON810 from spreading into wild populations of teosinte. Teosinte is an alien species that has been found growing in Spain in recent years. It is a wild relative of maize and native to Mexico. Crossings between teosinte and maize can enable transgenes from genetically engineered maize to spread and persist in the environment. Maize MON810 produces an insecticide and is grown on more than 100.000 hectares in Spain. Civil society organisations are now demanding that the cultivation of transgenic maize in the EU is stopped.

The civil society organisations informed the EU Commission several months ago about the outbreak of teosinte. Only now has the EU Commission said it is aware of the problem and that the data should be assessed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

“Nobody knows how teosinte was introduced into Spain, but it is spreading rapidly and already causing substantial damage for farmers. Once gene flow has occurred it can be very difficult and very costly to remove the plants and control the damage in the environment and for farmers.”, says María Carrascosa from Red de Semillas “Resembrando e Intercambiando” “That is why we are requesting that the release and cultivation of transgenic maize is now stopped in the EU.”

In 1998, when the cultivation of MON810 was allowed in the EU for the first time, the precondition was that there were no wild relatives to which the transgenes could spread. However, this circumstance changed in 2009 when teosinte was found to be growing in Spanish maize fields. Since then, no effective measures could be identified to prevent teosinte from spreading further. According to the CSOs, there now have to be consequences for the cultivation and release of genetically engineered maize in the EU. There will be a meeting of the EU Member States on 8 July at which existing and future authorisations for MON810, Bt11 and maize 1507 will be discussed.

The CSOs are also urging the Spanish government to take rapid action and provide further information. They want to know why the Spanish government refused to officially inform the EU Commission. It appears that Monsanto hid the problem from the European Food Safety Authority for several years - this is revealed in the annual monitoring reports which are requested under EU regulation.

“The outbreak of teosinte and the risk of transgenes spreading must no longer be kept secret from the public. If teosinte acquires the transgene from MON810 and starts to produce insecticidal toxins, this would pose an unprecedented risk to farmers and the environment”, says Andoni García Arriola from the Coordinadora de Organizaciones Agrarias y Ganaderas.

The following organisations are joining for this media release: Amigos de la Tierra; CECU - Confederación de Consumidores y Usuarios ; COAG - Coordinadora de Organizaciones de Agricultores y Ganaderos ; Ecologistas en Acción ; GEKKO Foundation; GeneWatch UK; Greenpeace Spain; PALT-

Plataforma Andalucía Libre de Transgénicos; Red de Semillas "Resembrando e Intercambiando" ; Testbiotech ; Save our Seeds; Software AG Stiftung; VsF-Justicia Alimentaria Global; ZSL-Foundation of Future Farming.

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Further information: [The statement from the Spanish government \(20-06-2016\)](#) [2]

[The CSO letter to the European Commission \(24-02-2016\)](#) [3]

[The CSO letter to the Spanish government: \(25-02-2016\)](#) [4]

[The statement from the EU Commission \(07-06-2016\)](#) [5]

[The CSO letter to the Spanish government \(24-06-2016\)](#) [6]

[The upcoming meeting of the EU Member States](#) [7]

Attachment

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[Outbreak of Teosinte in Spain.pdf](#) [8]

1.19 MB

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