

Genetically engineered maize: risks not under control

Companies disregarding EU regulation
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The EU Commission wants to allow the cultivation of genetically engineered maize before the growing season 2017 starts. Three variants of transgenic maize producing insecticidal toxins, registered as MON810, Maize 1507 and Bt 11, are being considered. Monsanto, DuPont/Pioneer and Syngenta are pushing for the market introduction of the seeds. EU Member States are expected to vote on this issue on 9 December.

As shown in a new Testbiotech backgrounder, large-scale cultivation of the transgenic plants can result in risks to health and agro-ecosystems, none of which have ever been assessed in detail, including various combinatorial effects. Moreover, the transgene may spread into the environment via gene flow to teosinte, a wild relative of maize. In addition experts put in question if the transgenic plants provide any benefits to the farmers.

The Testbiotech analysis shows that all the above-mentioned companies are intentionally breaching EU regulations; for several years, they concealed the fact that teosinte plants had appeared in Spanish maize fields. Teosinte can produce hybrids with genetically engineered maize that are able to persist in the environment. However, despite the companies being aware of the problem, they failed to provide any data on potential gene transfer that would be necessary for carrying out risk assessment.

“The companies have an obligation to provide data to conclude on the likelihood of the occurrence of transgenic teosinte plants and any resulting potential hazards for farmers and the environment. Without reliable data, the risks cannot be assessed and the cultivation of genetically engineered maize has to be prohibited,” says Christoph Then for Testbiotech.

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Further information: [Testbiotech backgrounder](#) [2]

[New York Times report on the failure of transgenic crops in the US](#) [3]

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[3] <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/30/business/gmo-promise-falls-short.html>

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