

EU Parliament against the approval of new genetically engineered soybeans

Committee on the Environment demands further investigation into the effects of herbicide applications

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Tomorrow, EU Member States will vote in Brussels on import approval for a new variety of genetically engineered soybeans. Today, just before the vote, the Committee on the environment of the EU Parliament demanded that the import and use of these soybeans in food and feed was rejected. They maintain that residues left after spraying with specific herbicides to which the plants were resistant needed further and more detailed investigation before approval was given. The soybeans (DAS-68416-4) developed by the US company Dow can be sprayed with a combination of 2,4-D and glufosinate. During the approval process, the European Food Safety Authority EFSA neither investigated the residues from spraying nor any potential interactions even though these herbicides are thought to be damaging to health.

“These soybeans are indicative of developments leading to detrimental effects on the environment and new risks to health. Companies, such as Bayer, Monsanto and Dow, are patenting seeds that are resistant to more and more herbicides in ever higher dosages. The 'arms race' in the fields means there is an increasing amount of residues left in the harvests of the crops,” says Christoph Then for Testbiotech. „The EU Commission and the European Food Safety Authority are clearly ignoring the obvious risks arising from consumption of the harvested products.“

Testbiotech fears that many EU Member States will abstain in tomorrow's vote and thereby open up a way for the EU Commission to approve the imports. This is a scenario that could soon be repeated: on 17 July, the EU Member States will again be deliberating on imports of further genetically engineered soybeans resistant to multiple herbicides. For the first time, this will be about the import of genetically engineered soybean varieties each resistant to three different herbicides. Amongst others, they will be voting on a soybean variety produced by Bayer that can be sprayed with a combination of the herbicides glyphosate, isoxaflutole and glufosinate.

The EU Commission and the European Food Safety Authority EFSA want to give approval without further detailed investigation of either the residues from spraying or possible interactions. Whether or not the environment and consumers are protected from such risks will depend on the way that the EU Member States vote. Testbiotech is calling on the Member States to vote „No“ in the upcoming votes.

The expectation is that there will be an increase in problems with the herbicide load of genetically engineered plants. In 2016, Monsanto was granted a European patent on genetically engineered plants that are resistant to an extremely high dosage of glyphosate. The patent covers wheat, maize, rye, rice, oats, barley, lawn grass, sorghum, millet, sugar cane, tomatoes, potatoes, soybeans, cotton, rapeseed, sunflowers and alfalfa. In Germany, the maximum approved limit of glyphosate is 3.6 kg/year per hectare. But according to the patent, if these new plants are grown, almost 18 kg per hectare could be sprayed. Risks for the environment and residues in the plants will increase correspondingly. At the same time, Bayer was granted several patents in 2016 for plants resistant to isoxaflutole.

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Further information: [Background on genetic engineering and glyphosate resistant plants](#) [2]

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