

Germany does not want to stop import of Bayer's new genetically engineered 'toxic soybeans'

Plants are resistant to a cocktail of herbicides known to be harmful to human health
Wednesday, 19 July 2017

The German government recently abstained in a vote on allowing EU imports of genetically engineered plants; and thereby effectively smoothed the way for the business interests of Bayer and Dow AgroSciences. These companies want the EU to approve two new genetically engineered soybeans for import and usage in food and feed. Both these new soybean plants have been engineered to be resistant to three herbicides known to leave residues in the harvest. According to the data available, consumption of the soybeans is likely to pose health risks.

In the vote on Monday this week, the majority of EU member states voted against authorisation of the soybeans. The abstention of Germany was a decisive reason why the vote failed to return a qualified majority. As things stand, a second vote on the import of these soybeans will take place mid of September. Testbiotech wants to use the remaining time until the second vote to convince the German government to vote against the authorisation.

“Economic interests, such as those of Bayer, should not have priority over the broader interests of society,” says Christoph Then for Testbiotech. “We want the rules to be obeyed. Approval for genetically engineered plants cannot be given if the risks they pose are not sufficiently investigated.”

Testbiotech points out that the herbicides are known to leave residues in the harvest, which are thought to pose significant health risks. According to the European Food Safety Authority EFSA, the existing data are not sufficient to assess the health risks. Therefore, Testbiotech is demanding that the political decision-makers reject the applications.

Testbiotech is seeing increasing political support: The Committee for the Environment at the EU Parliament recently made explicit demands for the assessment of residues from spraying in genetically engineered plants before market authorisation is granted. Further, in a letter to Testbiotech, the German Minister for the Environment, Barbara Hendricks backed demands to raise standards in the risk assessment of genetically engineered plants.

The pending applications concern three soybean events that have been made resistant to two or three herbicides:

- Glyphosate - which the international expert group IARC has classified as being possibly cancerogenic;
- Glufosinate - which is classified as being toxic for the reproductive system and is supposed to be removed from the market by end July 2018;
- Isoxaflutole - which is suspected by EFSA of causing cancer in humans;
- 2,4-D - which, according to recent publications, is suspected of giving rise to cancerogenic metabolites in the plants.

In the US, Brazil and Argentina, where the genetically engineered soybeans are cultivated, further additives are mixed into the herbicide formulations. It is known that some these additives show a higher toxicity than the single substances and are therefore no longer allowed in the EU.

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Further information: [Background on genetic engineering and glyphosate resistant plants](#) [2]
[Testbiotech comments on the three applications for GE soybeans](#) [3]

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[2] http://www.testbiotech.org/en/gendatenbank_basics

[3] <http://www.testbiotech.org/node/2029>

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[5] http://www.testbiotech.org/sites/default/files/2017-06-23_Antwort-Barbara-Hendricks_Juni_2017s.pdf

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