
Monsanto Sponsoring: EFSA gives details

The European Food Safety Authority confirms offer of sponsorship but says it was rejected

9 October 2017 / In a letter to Testbiotech, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has confirmed that there was an offer to sponsor a trip for a leading expert at the authority. According to present knowledge, the US company Monsanto made this offer via a straw man. It was meant to cover the travel costs of a trip to a conference in the USA where there was to be a discussion on the risks of glyphosate. According to the chair of the EFSA management board, Jaana Husu-Kallio, the authority sent one of their employees to the conference, but the offer of sponsorship was rejected.

From the content of confidential emails written in 2016, it appears that this was all organised through Monsanto in order to allay suspicions that the herbicide glyphosate is carcinogenic. The event took place at the annual conference of the international Society of Toxicology in 2017. In this context, Testbiotech warns against the systematic and hidden influence of companies, such as Monsanto; and that industry is apparently exerting its influence via different experts, academic institutions and organisations.

"We welcome the fact that EFSA rejected the offer of sponsorship in accordance with its guidelines, and we have no reason to doubt this clarification," says Christoph Then for Testbiotech. "We have, however, more general concerns about whether EFSA defence mechanisms are sufficiently robust to fight off the influence of industry. Currently, the EFSA more or less assumes that an expert is independent as long it is not known whether he/she is being paid by industry."

As the above mentioned emails show, any payments made by Monsanto would have been hidden – so that everyone involved could keep their hands clean.

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