

Will there be GMO fast track approvals in the EU?

Testbiotech warns about planned trade deal with the US

9 March 2020 / Testbiotech warned in a letter to the EU Commission against a planned trade agreement between the EU and the Trump administration. The deal might allow fast track approvals for genetically engineered plants. Such plans were reported by the media in Brussels. They would be contrary to the views of many experts in EU member states and independent scientists, who have repeatedly drawn attention to substantial insufficiencies and gaps in current EU risk assessment. In fact, the EU Parliament has adopted with large majorities more than 40 resolutions against further import approvals. Current standards in risk assessment should be substantially tightened rather than weakened as demanded by the US government and industry.

Just recently, the results of the international RAGES research project confirmed substantial flaws and gaps in the EU risk assessment of genetically engineered plants; the project was carried out completely independently of the industry. Neither the industry nor the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) or the EU Commission could show in any detail that the main scientific findings of RAGES were incorrect. Meanwhile, several of the findings have been published in scientific journals after peer review.

Some of the problems also are evident for ordinary citizens: in recent years, around 80 approvals for the import of harvested of genetically engineered seeds were granted. Amongst those, many approvals were for plants in which more than one trait was engineered, e.g. traits producing a diversity of insecticidal toxins and which were, in addition, engineered to be resistant to several herbicides. Until now, there have been no studies to test the safety of food derived from such plants. If feeding studies are requested by the EU at all, they are only for plants that are not genetically engineered in regard to more than one trait.

Consequently, those plants which pose the greatest risks are not tested for combinatorial effects and long-term impacts. Furthermore, there are no investigations into how the whole mixture of the plants affects the safety of food chain or animal and human health.

So far, the EU Commission has not actively made an effort to introduce higher standards in risk assessment. Instead, the Commission has simply referred to EFSA statements which assumed that most of the findings would not be new. However, this cannot be a reason for doing nothing. Some of the gaps in risk assessment have been well-known for many years and need to be closed as soon as possible.

“In recent years, significant flaws in EU risk assessment have been protracted and even perpetuated by trade agreements such as CETA. Under no circumstances should a deal be made with the US to speed up the approval process. It would not only be irresponsible, it would also threaten the legally binding high level of protection in the EU for human health and the environment,” says Christoph Then for Testbiotech.

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Further information: [The letter sent to the EU Commission](#) [2]

[Media report on the new trade agreement with the US](#) [3]

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[Video clip about gaps in risk assessment of GE soybeans](#) [5]

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[1] <mailto:info@testbiotech.org>

[2] <https://www.testbiotech.org/content/letter-eu-commission-no-speeding-eu-approval-gmos-march-2020>

[3] <http://www.politico.eu/article/eu-mulls-faster-genetically-modified-food-approvals-for-trump/>

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