
EU Parliament votes against import approvals for transgenic plants

Soybeans and cotton from BASF not welcome

16 February 2022 / The EU parliament has voted against two resolutions for import approval of transgenic soybean (GMB151) and cotton (GHB614) produced by BASF. The plants are resistant to herbicides, such as glyphosate and isoxaflutole, soybean GMB151 also produces an insecticidal toxin. Reasons for rejection are, for example, the damage that cultivation of the plants can cause in countries like Brazil. The Parliament also criticises the insufficient risk assessment conducted by European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

Testbiotech has in a backgrounder set out its findings on the risks of soybean GMB151 and the EFSA assessment. It raised concerns especially because the plants were not tested under realistic conditions: contrary to the requirements of EU regulation, the plants were not tested under sufficiently realistic conditions. Field trials were not performed in all of the most relevant soy producing countries. Nor were the plants treated with the amount of herbicides that would be applied in agricultural practice.

Furthermore, in Testbiotech's opinion, the effects arising from the consumption of food derived from the plants should be examined in much more detail, e.g. to look into whether the plants might trigger immune diseases such as chronic inflammation. The intestinal microbiome should also be taken into account in this context.

In a move to improve the standards of risk assessment, Testbiotech filed two legal cases in 2021 at the EU Court of Justice. The cases concerned a maize variety and a soybean variety produced by Bayer. If these court cases are successful, this would create a precedent decision that could also have implications for further market approvals.

However, so far, the EU Commission, which will make the decisions, has neither responded to the parliament resolutions nor to the scientific publications showing substantial gaps in EU risk assessment.

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