

Close EFSA's open doors to industry!

Joint letter sent by NGOs to alert the EU Commission
Thursday, 21 January 2010
Munich / Brussels

Four NGOs, Testbiotech, Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO Brussels), Friends of the Earth Europe (FOE), and Lobbycontrol are now jointly addressing the EU Commission about a scandal involving a leading member of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) who moved directly into the agribusiness company Syngenta. They are calling for a thorough investigation of the circumstances and urging the commission to take immediate action.

"So far no appropriate action has been taken by the EFSA", says Christoph Then from Testbiotech. "The Commission must react to this new case of an EU official going through revolving doors. There is a clear conflict with the legitimate interests of the EFSA".

It was recently made public that the former head of the EFSA's GMO panel, Suzy Renckens, had become Head of Biotech Regulatory Affairs for Europe, Africa and Middle East (EAME) at Syngenta just one month after she quit the EFSA. In her own words, Ms Renckens now lobbies for Syngenta to influence EU decision-making on genetically engineered organisms. This is the very same issue she was responsible for regulating with the EFSA.

"In cases like this, a tightly enforced cooling-off period is essential for several reasons. Former staff members and especially decision makers from EU authorities can exploit their previous status to unduly influence their former colleagues. However the EFSA did not raise any objections or impose any obligations in relation to this direct move into industry of one of its leading staff members," explains Nina Katzemich from Lobbycontrol.

Members of EU public services are supposed to ask for approval from their institutions for any new post within a period of two years of leaving. The EFSA only appeared to act on this conflict after it was highlighted by the NGO Testbiotech. EFSA sent several e-mails to Ms Renckens at the end of 2009 reminding her of her obligations - long after she was informed about the new situation. Ms Renckens had already informed EFSA in May 2008 that she had started work at Syngenta.

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Attachment



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354.15 KB

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