

## EU about to vote on market application of four types of genetically engineered soybeans - Warning on risks to the food chain

Brussels, 16 January 2012. Tomorrow, in a new appeal committee procedure, the EU member states will vote on market applications for four types of genetically engineered soybeans and their usage in food and feed.

Specifically, the vote will be on:

- Roundup Ready soybean 40-3-2 produced by Monsanto, which has been made tolerant to the herbicide glyphosate;
- Basta Soybean A5547-127 produced by Bayer CropScience, which has been made tolerant to the herbicide glufosinate;
- Bt-Soybean MON87701 produced by Monsanto, which is the first transgenic soybean on the market to produce an insecticidal protein; and,
- Optimum GAT Soybean 356043 produced by DuPont/Pioneer, which has been made tolerant to two different herbicides, glyphosate and ALS-Inhibitors

In a joint letter, Friends of the Earth Europe and Testbiotech are urging the member states to reject the applications for several reasons. According to their letter written to the member states, these genetically engineered plants do not bring any advantages to consumers or food producers. On the contrary, there are concerns that the food chain will be exposed to a unique mixture of toxins and residues from herbicides. Furthermore, especially if these products from herbicide tolerant plants are authorised, the EU would be supporting unsustainable agriculture leading to an increase in herbicide-resistant weeds, new plant diseases as well as significant risks to farmers, rural communities and biodiversity.

These cases highlight the substantial weaknesses in the comparative risk assessment practised by EFSA because significant findings were not investigated further. Compared to their conventional counterparts, these GM plants show many significant differences in their compositional analysis and agronomic performance. In the case of the soybean MON87701, which produces insecticidal proteins, several experts have described specific risks to the immune system.

Under the Lisbon Treaty the new procedure replaces votes on the level of the EU Council that were until now necessary for the authorisation of genetically engineered crops. In the Appeal Committee, political representatives of each of the member states will vote instead of the ministers. If the required majority is not achieved, the EU Commission will take a decision. This will be the first Appeal Committee decision on genetically engineered crops. The soybeans were voted on once before last year at an initial meeting of experts from the member states. No qualified majority was reached. Germany, Spain and England were amongst those that voted in favour of all four applications, while countries like France, Italy Poland and Austria were against or abstained.

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