
EFSA under criticism by EU Court of Auditors - "Management of conflict of interest situations is not adequate"

Brussels, 13.10.2012. The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has recently published a report on the "Management of conflict of interest in selected EU Agencies". None of the four EU agencies assessed - one being the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) - have adequate policies in place. Revolving doors at EFSA are explicitly mentioned in the report. One of the deficiencies identified is a lack of clear, transparent and consistent policies and procedures concerning a breach of trust by experts or staff members. On the political level, the ECA exposes the lack of a comprehensive EU regulatory framework dedicated to conflict of interest.

Testbiotech has revealed several conflicts of interest in EFSA's work. These also involve the so-called GMO panel that deals with risk assessment of genetically engineered plants. In particular, the influence of the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI), which is financed by the biotech and food industry, has been exposed in several reports by Testbiotech and other organisations.

In its response to the ECA report EFSA now states: "There is no involvement of ILSI as such in any EFSA scientific activities." Testbiotech is of the opinion that this statement is very weak, since the wording "as such" does in reality not exclude ILSI having a significant impact. For example, the GMO Panel chair from 2003-2012, Harry Kuiper, was while in office also involved in ILSI activities.

EFSA recently published an opinion about a publication of results of an animal feeding study that shows some health impacts on rats being exposed to genetically engineered maize NK603 and the herbicide Roundup. EFSA has in the past on several occasions published positive opinions on NK603, declaring it as safe. In the light of ECA's report, Testbiotech recommends setting up an international group of experts which would deal with the findings of the rat study and have no ties to EFSA, since it is unlikely that EFSA is conducting its assessment in an unbiased way.

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[Report of Testbiotech on EFSA and ILSI](#) [3]

[Report about ILSI](#) [4]

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