

The European Food Safety Authority: Using double standards when assessing feeding studies

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Opinions of the authority show a bias in the scientific standards applied to risk assessments of genetically engineered plants

A Testbiotech background, Christoph Then, October 2012

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Summary

Recently published research on chronic (long term) animal feeding trials using genetically engineered maize (MON810) and the herbicide Roundup has been harshly criticised by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA 2012). The research was led by French Professor Gilles-Eric Séralini of Caen University (Séralini et al. 2012) and although it was published in the peer-reviewed journal *Food and Chemical Toxicology*, the results were criticised by EFSA for not meeting specific scientific standards such as for example set out by the OECD (EFSA 2012a).

However, detailed analysis of former EFSA opinions shows that the authority has not taken a consistent approach when examining such scientific research. On a number of past occasions, EFSA has accepted without question the results from publications, on the risk assessment of genetically engineered plants, that are not in accordance with the scientific standards now being applied by EFSA to criticise the French study. Unlike Séralini et al. (2012), these earlier studies did not conclude that there were any health impacts from eating genetically engineered plants. This inconsistency suggests that EFSA is 'picking and choosing' when to apply the scientific standards.

There also is evidence that the food safety authorities of EU Member States are using similar double

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