

EU Commission wants to allow GE maize SmartStax

Monsanto's genetically engineered maize produces six different insecticides
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On 10 June, the EU Commission and representatives from EU Member States are set to discuss and probably vote on the market authorisation of the genetically engineered maize SmartStax for use in food and feed. SmartStax is a joint Monsanto and Dow AgroSciences product that produces six insecticidal proteins and is tolerant to two herbicides. Although dossiers from the industry showed substantial flaws its market authorisation was viewed favourably by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in 2010. For example, combinatorial effects between the insecticidal toxins and the residues from spraying were never investigated. So far, SmartStax is not authorised for sale on the EU market. In December 2012, Testbiotech raised the alarm warning that the maize might have already entered the market illegally. Instead of stopping imports, the Commission is now pressing ahead by trying to force a decision through allowing SmartStax for use in food and feed.

"This is a serious violation of consumers' interests", says Christoph Then for Testbiotech. "EU Commissioner Tonio Borg should think about whose interests he is acting in. Monsanto has only just announced that it will no longer file applications for new genetically engineered plants in the EU, so why is this plant that produces multiple toxins about to be allowed in food and feed?"

As early as 2010, Testbiotech, warned that the risk assessment of SmartStax was seriously flawed and at the same time published some of the industry's dossiers, which had been leaked to it. Since that SmartStax was never authorised in the EU, but neither was any action taken to prevent the

maize from being imported, especially from the US where it is grown extensively. Laboratories and experts working for the authorities informed Testbiotech that there is no effective method to test specifically for SmartStax, which can easily be mistaken for other kinds genetically engineered maize. For this reason, we urged the EU Commission to take measures against it being imported. Meanwhile, due to Tonio Borg's failure to respond, Testbiotech has filed a complaint with the EU Ombudsman. Testbiotech believes that because of the way in which the EU Commission is now trying to legalise SmartStax, this must be considered as indirect proof that it has in fact already entered the market.

Besides SmartStax, the authorisation of several other genetically engineered maize plants with various technical DNA combinations will be discussed at the meeting and also voted probably. Allowing pollen from GE maize MON810 on to the market is another item on the agenda despite the fact that industry has not provided any specific data on its risks. So far, this pollen is considered to be illegal if it is found in food products such as honey.

SmartStax combines various insecticidal toxins that were originally found only in soil bacteria. It is grown in the US because pest insects there have increasingly adapted to genetically engineered plants that produce just single toxins. One of the six toxins in SmartStax (Cry1A105), is artificially synthesised from several bacterial proteins and does not have a true homology in nature. In addition, it is resistant to glyphosate herbicides (brands such as Roundup) and glufosinate (brands such as Liberty). The risks of this stacked maize have never been fully investigated. There was, for example, one trial where poultry was fed with the kernels for just 42 days in order to observe weight gain. The authorities handling market application in the EU have however never received any results from feeding trials with kernels or plants designed to investigate health effects. There has been no investigation of combinatorial effects between the residues from spraying with the herbicides and the insecticidal proteins as produced by the plants. Several of the dossiers produced by industry do not fulfill normal scientific standards. Consequently, Testbiotech considers this maize unsafe.

Testbiotech is demanding a new and comprehensive risk assessment of SmartStax, that the authorization procedure be stopped and efficient measures implemented to stop its import into the EU. For this reason an [e-mail alert](#) [1] has been started to prevent the EU Commission from allowing SmartStax to be sold in the EU.

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Further information: [Agenda of the meeting of the EU Commission with member states](#) [3]

[Backgrounder on the maize imports](#) [4]

[More background on risk assessment of SmartStax](#) [5]

[Correspondence with EU Commission and complaint to the EU Ombudsman](#) [6]

[Briefing on risk assessment of pollen from GE maize MON810](#) [7]

[E-mail alert to prevent the EU Commission from allowing SmartStax to be sold in the EU:](#) [8]

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Links

[1] <http://www.testbiotech.de/en/node/815>

[2] <mailto:info@testbiotech.org>

[3] http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/standing_committees/sc_modif_genet/docs/ag10062013_en.pdf

[4] <http://www.testbiotech.de/node/751>

[5] <http://www.testbiotech.de/en/node/515>

[6] <http://www.testbiotech.de/node/813>

[7] <http://www.testbiotech.org/node/766>

[8] <http://www.testbiotech.de/en/smartstax>