

EFSA GMO Newsletter March - July 2014

Submitted by Anonymous (nicht überprüft) on 29. July 2014 - 22:26

News

Testbiotech and several other German NGOs are demanding the rejection of Monsanto's application for the import of viable MON88302 oilseed rape kernels and the risk assessment thereof performed by EFSA (<http://www.testbiotech.org/en/node/1068> [1]).

EFSA assumes in its opinion that seeds will indeed be lost during transportation within the EU, and that the genetically engineered plants will grow in the environment. Nevertheless, it came to the conclusion that the risk of transgenes spreading into the environment is low (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/doc/3701.pdf> [2]). According to a detailed Testbiotech analysis, EFSA is deliberately playing down the risks of the uncontrolled spread of MON88302 into the environment (<http://www.testbiotech.org/node/1079> [3]).

In May, Testbiotech and a broad coalition of organisations started an international call to stop the spread of genetically engineered organisms into the environment. The initiative says that binding regulations must be implemented to prevent the release of genetically engineered plants that can persist and invade the environment, or lead to transgene flow into native populations or local varieties at centres of origin and of genetic diversity. The organisations will be approaching the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and encouraging them to become actively involved (<http://www.stop-the-spread-of-transgenes.org> [4]).

In a letter to the EU Commission, Testbiotech is once more asking for the market authorisation of genetically engineered maize 1507 to be stopped (<http://www.testbiotech.org/node/1054> [5]). The letter was written in response to a statement received from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) concerning two Testbiotech reports (<http://www.testbiotech.org/node/1055> [6]). In its statement, EFSA fails to invalidate the crucial points raised by Testbiotech. The authority defends its own risk assessment but cannot disprove the substantial lack of relevant and sufficiently reliable data, as Testbiotech claims in its reply to the EFSA review.

In April, Testbiotech published a further report on maize 1507 showing that industry has a strong influence on all kinds of risk research. The Testbiotech report concludes that there is not enough adequately reliable data to carry out a proper risk assessment and that the authorisation process should be stopped. The report further revealed that research on the environmental risks of maize 1507 is dominated by a network of scientists who are not employed by industry but have strong links. One example is Blair D. Siegfried who is the inventor behind patents held by Dow on the insecticidal toxin Cry1F expressed by maize 1507. He was also involved in many relevant publications as an 'independent' scientist. Siegfried has not made his relation to Dow transparent in his studies on Cry1F maize (<http://www.testbiotech.org/node/1030> [7]).

Although an EU Commission decision on the cultivation of genetically engineered maize 1507 has been expected for several months, it has still not been published. In the meantime, new information has become available indicating that the biotech industry is pulling out of the cultivation of transgenic crops in the EU. According to Testbiotech investigations, US companies have just recently quietly withdrawn four EU applications for the cultivation genetically engineered plants (<http://www.testbiotech.org/en/node/1071> [8]).

In two instances Testbiotech has heavily criticised the standards of risk assessment for genetically engineered plants carried out by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). One concerns an application made by Monsanto for EU market authorisation for its new genetically engineered soybean MON87769, which it claims has a positive effect on health because of omega-3 fatty acids contained in the oil. However, EFSA did not assess the health effects as claimed (<http://www.testbiotech.org/node/1062> [9]). In the other, Testbiotech criticised an opinion regarding herbicide-tolerant genetically modified cotton GHB614 x LLCotton25. The compositional analysis of this cotton line has shown a significantly higher content in highly toxic compounds (gossypol). Even

so, EFSA still does not have any concerns over the use of the proteins and oil from the cotton plants in food and feed (<http://www.testbiotech.org/node/1063> [10]).

The EU Commission and EU Member States appointed seven new members to the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). EFSA is responsible for the risk assessment of all issues related to food and feed safety in the EU including genetically engineered plants, pesticides and food additives. Its Management Board is the food agency's governing body, and also meant to ensure its independence. Following recommendations by a handful of conservative and liberal MEPs in the European Parliament, two food industry lobbyists were short-listed from proposals made by the EU Commission as top candidates for these positions. After criticism from several NGOs, including Testbiotech, the appointment of Beate Kettlitz from the lobby organisation FoodDrinkEurope was rejected by EU Member States (<http://www.testbiotech.org/en/node/1037> [11]).

Votes

On 23 June, the “Standing Committee on genetically modified food and feed & environmental risk” took a vote on market approval for herbicide-tolerant genetically modified maize NK603. No qualified majority was reached.

On 23 May, the Standing Committee voted on three lines of genetically engineered soybeans, soybean 305423, soybean MON87705 and soybean BPS-CV127-9. No qualified majority was reached in any of the votes. The decision was forwarded to the Appeal Committee.

On 24 April, the Standing Committee voted on herbicide-tolerant genetically modified soybean MON87708 and herbicide-tolerant genetically modified maize T25. No qualified majority was reached in any of the votes. The decision was forwarded to the Appeal Committee.

On July 10, the Appeal Committee voted on market approval for renewal of market approval for maize NK 603. No qualified majority was reached.

On 10 June, the Appeal Committee voted on market approval for genetically modified soybean MON87708, maize T25, soybean 305423, soybean MON87705 and soybean BPS-CV127-9. No qualified majority was reached in any of the votes.

On 27 March, the Appeal Committee voted on market approval for herbicide-tolerant genetically modified cotton T304-40 for food and feed uses. No qualified majority was reached in any of the votes.

On 27 February, the Appeal Committee voted on market approval for herbicide-tolerant genetically modified oilseed rape GT73. No opinion was reached.

All decisions were forwarded to the EU Commission.

New Opinions

On 17 June, EFSA published an opinion regarding herbicide tolerant oilseed rape MON 88302 (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3701.htm> [12]). See Testbiotech comment above.

On 13 June, EFSA published an opinion regarding Monsanto's 2012 Post Marketing Environmental Monitoring report for cultivation of maize MON 810 in Europe (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3704.htm> [13]).

On 13 June, EFSA published a statement on Greek emergency measures regarding maize MON 810 (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3732.htm> [14]).

On 16 May, EFSA published opinions regarding cotton GHB614 × LLCotton25 (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3680.htm> [15]) and soybean MON 87769 (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3644.htm> [16]). See above for Testbiotech statements regarding these two events.

On 13 March, EFSA published a statement to supplement the risk assessment of cotton MON 88913 (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3591.htm> [17]).

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- [1] <http://www.testbiotech.org/en/node/1068>
- [2] <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/doc/3701.pdf>
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