

Genetically engineered maize 1507: Industry and EFSA disguise true content of Bt toxin in the plants

Meta-analysis shows data are insufficient to conclude on the safety of the plants

Munich/ Brussels 9 February 2014 Testbiotech made a first meta-analysis of some of the data on genetically engineered maize 1507 submitted by industry to authorities in the EU, the US, Australia and New Zealand for their approval procedures. Correct data on the Bt content of the plants is a fundamental prerequisite for a reliable environmental risk assessment of these plants. However the assessment and comparison of the data has revealed huge variations in the amounts of Bt toxin in the plants, and further shows that 1507 maize plants are neither sufficiently homogenous nor predictable. On the contrary, they exhibit much greater differences in their quality than suggested by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). It is likely that breeding methods, regional environmental conditions, the application of herbicides, climate changes and other factors will substantially impact the Bt content of the plants.

“The huge uncertainties in the risk assessment are, for example, relevant for protected butterfly species, pollinators, soil organisms and wild animals as well as farm animals, ” says Christoph Then for Testbiotech "Fundamental parts of the risk assessment are flawed, thus the whole risk assessment of EFSA collapses like a house of cards as soon as the details are analysed.”

Genetically engineered maize 1507 which produces a Bt toxin (Cry1F) is close to authorisation in the EU. In December 2013, Testbiotech had already pointed out deficiencies in the environmental risk assessment of this maize. EU regulations request a high level of protection for human health and the environment and a reliable risk assessment by EFSA, therefore market approval for 1507 should therefore be withheld.

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