

## Stage set for new wave of genetically engineered plants to be approved and imported after EU elections

Outgoing EU Commission might approve several controversial applications before handing over

**23 May 2019 / More than 40 organisations from science, environmental protection, lobby control, food production and agriculture have today published a joint letter. They warn that the outgoing EU Commission might approve around a dozen genetically engineered plants on the basis of scientifically unacceptable risk assessment before handing over.**

The letter has been signed by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft (AbL), Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland (BUND), Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO), European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility (ENSSER), Friends of the Earth Europe (FOEE), Gene-Ethical Network (GeN), GeneWatch UK, Global 2000, Save our Seeds (SOS), Slow Food Germany, Testbiotech and many other civil society organisations. They are all demanding higher standards for the risk assessment of genetically engineered organisms. In this regard, the protection of health and the environment should be the highest priority.

At least twelve applications have been filed for approval, all of which have been assessed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Three of them concern genetically engineered maize that produce insecticidal toxins and are intended for use in cultivation. Amongst these is MON 810 (Bayer/ Monsanto), which is already grown in Spain and awaiting re-authorisation. There is a risk of uncontrolled spread from these plants: a wild species related to maize (teosinte) has proliferated in Spain for a number of years. Maize and teosinte can hybridize and may produce offspring with unintended biological characteristics and new risks for the environment.

Many of the plants have more than one genetically engineered trait. Amongst those, there are types of GE maize that produce up to six insecticidal toxins and are engineered to be resistant to several herbicides. The combinatorial risks for food safety emerging from the various toxins were not investigated.

One of the genetically engineered maize plants meant for import inherits additional risks: maize MON 87411 produces a so-called double strand RNA (dsRNA). These biologically active molecules are taken up into the intestine of insects when they eat the plants; from here they can then interfere with gene regulation and cell metabolism. This will kill the insects feeding on the plants. However, the safety of these plants in regard to humans and the environment cannot be demonstrated since the underlying biological mechanisms are highly complex.

Around 70 genetically engineered plants are already allowed for import and usage for food and feed in the EU. There are no studies on long-term or combinatorial health effects arising from diets with containing a mixture of these plants. In recent years, the EU Parliament has repeatedly voted against further EU market approvals. However, these votes were completely ignored by the EU Commission. Now, the signatories to the letter are concerned that the EU Commission will allow a further dozen of these risky plants to enter the EU market.

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Further information:

> **The letter** [www.testbiotech.org/node/2370](http://www.testbiotech.org/node/2370)

> **The list of signatories:**

Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft (AbL), [www.abl-ev.de/](http://www.abl-ev.de/)

Arche Noah, [www.arche-noah.at/](http://www.arche-noah.at/)

Agri-Activism UK, [www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/Agri-activism-UK-1623654241040911/](https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/Agri-activism-UK-1623654241040911/)

ARGE Gentechnik-frei, [www.gentechnikfrei.at/](http://www.gentechnikfrei.at/)

Beyond GM, <https://beyond-gm.org/>

Bioland e.V., [www.bioland.de/ueber-uns/bioland-ev.html](http://www.bioland.de/ueber-uns/bioland-ev.html)

Bundesverband Deutscher Milchviehhalter e. V. (BDM), <http://bdm-verband.org/html/>

Bundesverband Naturkost Naturwaren (BNN) e.V., [www.n-bnn.de](http://www.n-bnn.de)

BUND Naturschutz in Bayern e.V. (BN), [www.bund-naturschutz.de](http://www.bund-naturschutz.de)

Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland (BUND), [www.bund.net/](http://www.bund.net/)

Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO), <https://corporateeurope.org/en>

Deutscher Naturschutzring (DNR) e.V., [www.dnr.de](http://www.dnr.de)

Die Freien Bäcker e.V., [www.die-freien-baecker.de/](http://www.die-freien-baecker.de/)

EcoNexus, [www.econexus.info](http://www.econexus.info)

European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility (ENSSER), <https://ensser.org/>

EUROPAEM e.V., European Academy for Environmental Medicine, [www.europaem.eu](http://www.europaem.eu)

FIAN Deutschland, [www.fian.de](http://www.fian.de)

Forschung & Züchtung - LBS Dottenfelderhof e.V., [www.forschung-dottenfelderhof.de](http://www.forschung-dottenfelderhof.de)

Friends of the Earth Europe (FOEE), [www.foeeurope.org/](http://www.foeeurope.org/)

Gäa e.V.- Vereinigung ökologischer Landbau, [www.gaea.de](http://www.gaea.de)

Gene Ethical Network (GeN), <http://gen-ethisches-netzwerk.de/>

GEN Genetic Engineering Network UK, <http://www.genetwork.info/>

GeneWatch UK, [www.genewatch.org/](http://www.genewatch.org/)

Global 2000, [www.global2000.at/](http://www.global2000.at/)

GM Free Cymru, [www.gmfrecymru.org.uk/](http://www.gmfrecymru.org.uk/)

GM Freeze, [www.gmfreeze.org/](http://www.gmfreeze.org/)

GMWatch, [www.gmwatch.org/en/](http://www.gmwatch.org/en/)

grassroots foundation, [www.grassroots.de/](http://www.grassroots.de/)

IG Saatgut, [www.gentechnikfreie-saat.org/](http://www.gentechnikfreie-saat.org/)

Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NABU), [www.NABU.de](http://www.NABU.de)

Navdanya International, [www.navdanyainternational.org](http://www.navdanyainternational.org)

Noah, Friends of the Earth Denmark, <http://www.noah.dk/>

Ökologischer Ärztbund e.V., ÖÄB, [www.oekologischer-aerztebund.de](http://www.oekologischer-aerztebund.de)

OGMDangers, [www.OGMDangers.org](http://www.OGMDangers.org)

Sativa, [www.sativa-biosaatgut.de/](http://www.sativa-biosaatgut.de/)

Save our Seeds (SOS), [www.saveourseeds.org/](http://www.saveourseeds.org/)

Slow Food Germany, [www.slowfood.de/](http://www.slowfood.de/)

Testbiotech, [www.testbiotech.org](http://www.testbiotech.org)

Verband Katholisches Landvolk e.V., [www.landvolk.de](http://www.landvolk.de)

WeMove Europe, [www.WeMove.EU](http://www.WeMove.EU)

Za Zemiata, Friends of the Earth Bulgaria, [www.zazemiata.org](http://www.zazemiata.org)

Zivilcourage, [www.zivilcourage.ro](http://www.zivilcourage.ro)

Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft, [www.zukunftsstiftung-landwirtschaft.de](http://www.zukunftsstiftung-landwirtschaft.de)

> **Information about votes in EU Parliament:**

[www.greens-efa.eu/files/doc/docs/e491b1b487e5c6b48f553e1ef027bccf.pdf](http://www.greens-efa.eu/files/doc/docs/e491b1b487e5c6b48f553e1ef027bccf.pdf)