

Media release



The EU-Commission plans to allow the import of new genetically engineered soybeans despite deep concerns about carcinogenic residues

The soybeans are resistant to several herbicides

9 October 2015 / The EU Commission has stated that they see no need for detailed risk assessment of genetically engineered soybeans that can contain a mixture of probably carcinogenic residues. Monsanto's genetically engineered soybean MON 87708 × MON 89788 have been engineered to be resistant to a combination of the herbicides, glyphosate and dicamba. Residues from spraying with these herbicides are suspected of being carcinogenic.

In July 2015, Testbiotech started an online call for action against the authorisation of the soybeans. Just recently the Commission replied in a letter. The only conclusion that can be reached from the answer of the EU Commission, is that they plan to authorise the new genetically engineered soybeans without assessing the combination of residues from spraying that may cause cancer.

Glyphosate was recently classified as “probably carcinogenic” by an international expert group of the World Health Organisation (WHO). Dicamba degrades to compounds such as formaldehyde and has already been classified as carcinogenic for several years. If these soybeans are imported, the food and feed chain could be permanently exposed to a very specific mixture of toxic compounds. Under these circumstances, testing the specific combinatorial health effects of toxic compounds is absolutely necessary. The health effects caused by the combinatorial effects of these residues might be much more severe than it can be expected from assessment of the single components.

Just recently, the European Food Safety Authority EFSA gave the green light to the authorisation of another genetically engineered soybean produced by Bayer, known as FG72. This soybean is similarly problematic since it has also been engineered to be resistant to glyphosate and isoxaflutole. The residues from isoxaflutole are classified as “likely to be a human carcinogen”. This is a further case in which the European Food Safety Authority EFSA has failed to assess the combination of residues from spraying that may cause cancer.

“It is up to the EU Commission to set sufficiently robust standards to implement EU legal requirements based on the precautionary principle and requiring the highest scientific standards. Residues from spraying have to be expected in genetically engineered plants. Therefore, it is imperative that risk assessment takes these specific combinations of toxic residues from spraying into account”, Christoph Then says for Testbiotech.

Contacts & Informations

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The updated version of the call: www.testbiotech.org/node/1313

Testbiotech assessment of the EFSA opinion on MON 87708 × MON 89788: www.testbiotech.org/node/1314

Testbiotech assessment of the EFSA opinion on FG72: www.testbiotech.org/node/1336

The letter from the Commission: www.testbiotech.org/node/1361

The original media release from July 2015: www.testbiotech.org/en/node/1317