European Commission

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Mr Christoph Then
Executive Director Testbiotech
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Dear Mr Then,

Thank you for your letter dated 4 March 2016, which expresses concerns regarding the market authorisation of genetically modified soybeans resistant to glyphosate, isoxaflutole and dicamba.

I would like to remind you that the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has issued favourable opinions for these GMOs, which are the basis for the Commission's risk management decisions.

Regarding the active substance glyphosate, the maximum residue levels set in Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 are sufficiently protective for consumers. For the uses evaluated in the framework of the peer review, EFSA concluded that a risk for the consumer was not identified. Moreover, a review of all existing MRLs is currently ongoing and expected to be completed by end-2016/early-2017. In that MRL review, EFSA will take into account the revised toxicological reference values agreed by the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed on 10/11 December 2015.

The Commission has proposed to exclude the co-formulant POE-tallowamine from plant protection products containing glyphosate. In more general terms, the Commission, together with Member States experts and EFSA, has begun work on the identification of unacceptable co-formulants used in plant protection products, in order to further increase the protection of public health.

EFSA has recently published its Conclusion on the pesticides peer review of the active substance isoxaflutole. The Commission is currently analysing the outcome of that assessment and will in due course present a draft regulation renewing the approval or non-approving the active substance. If appropriate, the Commission may also propose an amendment of the MRLs in place for isoxaflutole. I seek your kind understanding that I cannot comment further at this point in time, as the Commission is in the process of establishing its position.

As regards the assessment of combined toxicity, I refer to my explanations in an earlier letter to you (Ares(2016)99874).

Regarding the recent EP resolutions on the draft authorisation decision for these 3 soybeans, I would like to assure you that the Commission has carefully considered these resolutions and gave a feedback to the Parliament. The Commission considers that it has not exceeded its implementing powers and that the safety of the 3 GMOs in question is ensured. Therefore the Commission intends to continue proceeding with the authorisation decisions at stake.

Yours sincerely,