

Testbiotech e. V. | Frohschammerstraße 14 | 80807 München

European Commission

European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

Mr Vytenis Andriukaitis

Health & Consumers Directorate-General

B – 1049 Brussels

Belgium

7 November 2014

Dear Mr Andriukaitis

**Suspected manipulation in the outcome of the EU research project
GRACE**

May we firstly congratulate you on your appointment as new EU Commissioner.

We would also like to introduce our organisation Testbiotech, which is dedicated to industry-independent expertise in the field of biotechnology and based in Munich. Our mission is to provide broader society with information to make informed decisions based on a sufficiently broad and pluralistic range of scientific expertise. One of our core activities is to closely follow authorisations for genetically engineered plants and the work of the Food Safety Authority EFSA (for more information at www.testbiotech.org).

We are writing to you today because we have published an independent evaluation of data from a feeding trial with rats conducted within the GRACE project, an EU- funded research project initiated under the former EU Commission. The rats were fed over a period of 90 days with genetically engineered maize MON810, which produces an insecticidal protein. The results were published in October 2014 in the journal *Archives of Toxicology* (Zeljenková et al., 2014) and the authors concluded there were no observable relevant toxicological effects.

However, evaluation by Testbiotech has found indications for negative health impacts on kidneys, liver and pancreas. These findings need to be examined much more thoroughly. Furthermore, the failure in the study to determine a concentration of MON810 at which no toxic effects were

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Impact Assessment in
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observed makes the entire study more or less invalid. Testbiotech also believes that the authors purposely published the results of the study in a scientific journal known for its affiliation to industry. One could assume that this journal was deliberately chosen to avoid a rigorous examination of the data.

According to the former EU Commission, the outcome of the research project will be decisive for future standards in the risk assessment of genetically engineered plants in the EU. Currently, it appears that the outcome has been manipulated to hide any doubts concerning the safety of these products.

If toxicological studies are publicly funded, we should be able to expect the highest standards in scientific quality and an avoidance of conflicts of interest. This is not the case with this project. This case shows that the mechanisms for securing quality in scientific work are not functioning. We have already raised concerns regarding conflicts of interest and experts working on the GRACE project in a report published in 2013, but there was no response from the former EU Commission.

Given the importance of this study, Testbiotech recommends the retraction of the paper. Re-publication should only be considered under a rigorous peer review process and in a journal with a scientific reputation not tarnished by questionable cooperation with industry, and which is not impacted by affiliations to the authors and has the highest standards regarding conflicts of interest.

With best regards



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Annex;
Backgrounder published by Testbiotech in November 2014
Backgrounder published by Testbiotech in April 2013
Publication by Zeljenková et al., 2014

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