Media release

Testbiotech complaint against the EU authorisation of 'toxic soybeans' produced by Bayer & Monsanto

Decision of the EU Commission breaches regulation on GMOs and pesticides

14 September 2016 / Testbiotech has requested that the EU Commission review its decision on the authorisation for import of genetically soybeans produced by Bayer and Monsanto. The soybeans can be sprayed with the herbicide glyphosate in combination with other herbicides, isoxaflutole and dicamba. At the end of July, the EU Commission gave the go ahead for the soybeans to be used in food and feed despite continuing concerns about health risks. Analysis carried out by Testbiotech shows that the decision made by the EU Commission breaches GMO and pesticide regulations.

Residues from spraying the soybeans with mixtures of glyphosate and the other herbicides used in agriculture in countries such as Argentina, Brazil and the USA remain in the harvest. The health risks of these specific mixtures of herbicides have never been assessed by the EU authorities. On the contrary, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) came to the conclusion, that currently there are simply not enough data to set residue levels as requested by EU regulations.

Furthermore, according to EU regulations, combinatorial effects, which can result from combined usage of different herbicides also need to be assessed. The EU Commission admits that such effects need to be investigated but claims that there are no suitable methods for doing so. However, as Testbiotech has pointed out, adequate testing would not create any major scientific difficulties.

In this case, further investigations are urgently needed: According to a toxicological dossier, mixtures of these residues are thought to have adverse effects on health such as genotoxicity, liver toxicity and tumours. Consumers and farm animals could be exposed to a combination of these substances that may be present as residues in the harvested crops. Despite these risks, the EU Commission and EFSA have failed to define safe residue levels and there has been no assessment of the combinatorial effects.

“The level of protection for health and the environment is being eroded by the decision making of the EU Commission. Existing EU regulations are infringed to serve the interests of industry,” says Christoph Then for Testbiotech. “We are now providing the EU Commission with an opportunity to correct its wrong decision.”

Testbiotech filed its request to review the decision in accordance with EU Directive 1367/2006. If it is rejected, further steps might be taken.

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Further information:

Technical dossier on the complaint: www.testbiotech.org/node/1717

Legal dossier on admissibility of the request: www.testbiotech.org/node/1716

Letter from the EU Commission sent with the decision to authorise the soybeans: www.testbiotech.org/node/1718