

Testbiotech, Frohschammerstraße 14, 80807 München

To
The Chair of the EFSA Management Board,
Ms Jaana Husu-Kallio

CC
EU Commission and Dr Bernhard Url, Executive Director at EFSA
Via email

Open letter

06 October 2017

Dear Ms Husu-Kallio

EFSA confirms sponsorship offer but says it was rejected

Thank you very much for your letter dated 28 September 2017. We would like to acknowledge that several of our questions were answered, and we have no reason to question your statement that the offer of sponsorship was rejected.

Our first source of information were confidential emails showing that Monsanto and some experts had agreed behind the scenes on activities to influence decision-making on the market authorisation of glyphosate. We now conclude from your response that this initiative did, indeed, lead to an offer of sponsorship to a leading expert at EFSA.

Our second source was the conference program of the Society of Toxicology (SOT), which named EFSA experts as official participants in a debate on the risks of glyphosate. The program gave the reasoned impression that some sponsorship for attending this conference had been accepted by the EFSA expert invited to speak. We now conclude from your answer that this impression is not in accordance with the facts.

This case is highly relevant for the overall debate on the hidden influence of regulated industry on academic institutions, organisations, specific experts and the authorities. In this case, the mechanisms of EFSA worked in so far that sponsorship was not accepted. Therefore, we would like to congratulate EFSA.

However, doubts remain about whether current EFSA provisions are strong enough to protect its independence. In short, we think it is not enough to consider an expert to be independent of regulated industry as long as no funding by industry is evident. This problem was already mentioned in our last contribution to the discussion on EFSA guidelines.

Looking at the case under discussion, our concerns have been strongly

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confirmed. The confidential emails mentioned above show that the Monsanto sponsorship was meant to be kept secret. As Daniel Goldstein, a leading expert at Monsanto wrote: „At this point, I certainly understand the need for Monsanto (and the other manufacturers) to stand back from proceedings and to participate as observers at most (if at all). Funding can perhaps come from the Glyphosate Consortium which is conducting the EU re-registration or via ECETOX or CEFIC, for example, and be routed via SOT or one or more academic institutions. At that point, we can be "hands off" altogether.“

In the light of these findings, Testbiotech still sees the need for EFSA to improve its own guidance to strengthen its independence from regulated industries. Thus, answering our questions should not be seen as the end, but rather as a starting point for further discussions and initiatives.

Yours sincerely



Dr Christoph Then,
Executive Director Testbiotech

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