

EU Parliament against new approvals for the import of genetically engineered plants

Resolutions concern plants from Bayer and Syngenta intended for food and feed

1 February 2019 / Yesterday the EU Parliament adopted with a large majority several resolutions against approvals for genetically engineered maize, oilseed rape and cotton. The resolutions were tabled by a cross party group of MEPS, initiated by the Green group. The resolutions call for higher standards in risk assessment and the strengthening of democratic decision making. The plants produced by Bayer and Syngenta are resistant to herbicides and produce insecticidal toxins, with some of them producing these in combination. One of the plants has additional gene constructs that make it resistant to antibiotics, another supposedly produces more biomass. In previous votes of the EU member states only a minority was in favour of allowing the crops to be imported for food and feed. Nevertheless, the EU Commission, as usual, plans to give green light for the approval.

“The European Parliament is sending a strong signal and showing that the current risk assessment of genetically engineered plants is inadequate. For example, there was no investigation of combinatorial effects or any detailed assessment of the residues from spraying, and many open questions remain regarding the potential impact on the immune system,” says Christoph Then for Testbiotech. “Contrary to EU regulations, the companies did not show that the plants are safe to be used in food and feed.”

It is not the first time that the EU Parliament has objected to GM import approvals. Since December 2015, there have been 31 such resolutions adopted, without the EU Commission taking any action. “The problems are urgent and require urgent attention. According to EU legislation, health and environmental safety have a very high priority, but the EU Commission appears to be not taking this seriously enough,” says Christoph Then.

Currently, Testbiotech is aiming to make more detailed investigations mandatory for genetically engineered plants in a case brought before the EU court (case C-82/17 P). Unfortunately, as stated by the Attorney General in 2018, the EU Court does not seem to be in a position to request a further, more detailed risk assessment. The final decision of the court is expected in 2019.

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Further information:

Link to the resolutions: www.testbiotech.org/node/2324

Links to Testbiotech assessments:

- cotton GHB614 × LLCotton25 × MON 15985: www.testbiotech.org/node/2209
- maize 5307: www.testbiotech.org/node/2205
- maize MON 87403: www.testbiotech.org/node/2210
- oilseed rape (OSR) Ms8, Rf3 and Ms8 × Rf3: www.testbiotech.org/node/2131