EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Food and feed safety, innovation
The Director

Brussels,
SANTE E3/SH/gk (2019)4366187

Dear Dr Then,

Subject: Authorisation of genetically modified organisms - your letter of 23 May 2019

Thank you for your letter of 23 May 2019[1], co-signed with 42 organisations and addressed to Commissioner Andriukaitis, concerning the pending authorisations of genetically modified organisms (GMO). Commissioner Andriukaitis has asked me to reply on his behalf.

In your letter, you express disagreement with the risk assessment of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) on some GMOs. I would like to note that, as part of the public consultations on the respective scientific opinions of EFSA, NGOs, including Testbiotech, have already submitted comments regarding the risk assessment performed on those GMOs. EFSA has always scrutinised those comments and has carried out further assessment when new scientific evidence, not available at the time of the adoption of the respective opinions, was provided. Still, EFSA has concluded that those comments do not contain any new scientific elements that would lead the EFSA GMO Panel to reconsider its favourable opinions. As the risk assessment falls under the competence of EFSA, I kindly suggest that you contact EFSA should you wish to discuss further the previous risk assessments.

I note that Commissioner Andriukaitis has already replied to you in his letter of 3 May 2017[2] on the concerns you raise regarding the applications for GM maize for cultivation. Concerning your comment on gene flow, I would like to reiterate that EFSA, in its technical report of 23 September 2016, has particularly considered the potential adverse effects associated with gene flow from maize MON810, Bt11 and 1507 to teosinte and has concluded that environmental harm is unlikely.

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[1] Our reference Ares(2019)3386339
[2] Our reference Ares(2017)2313724

Dr Christoph Then
Testbiotech e.V.
Frohschammerstr. 14
80807 Munich
Germany
E-mail: christoph.then@testbiotech.org

I would like to reassure you that the Commission authorises only those GMOs that EFSA has evaluated to be safe. These GMOs must be labelled when placed on the market thus providing the choice to the consumers to consume or not such products.

Furthermore, the transparency and sustainability of risk assessment by EFSA will be further reinforced by the new rules recently adopted by the Council and the European Parliament[3]. I trust that this transparency will improve the acceptance by society on how the EU ensures that food and feed placed on the market is safe for human and animal health, and for the environment.

Yours sincerely,

Sabine Jülicher

[3] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-19-1031_en.htm