

EU Commission approves eight applications for import of transgenic crops

Decision ignores recent studies and EU Parliament resolutions

25 January 2021 / The EU Commission has approved eight applications for the import of genetically engineered plants. The approvals were issued for maize and soybeans which produce insecticidal toxins and are engineered to be resistant to herbicides such as glyphosate; the approvals include five new variants of GE plants and three renewals. The harvest of these plants is now allowed for import and usage in food and feed. By the end of last year, the EU Parliament had already passed several resolutions demanding that these imports could not be not allowed.

Just one day before the EU Commission decision last week, Testbiotech published a new report on gaps in the EU risk assessment of GE plants. The report shows that the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has for years defended assumptions even if they are in contradiction to the facts. In addition, EFSA is intentionally trying to distract awareness away from the 'dark' sides of its risk assessment.

The newly approved applications display the same flaws that were revealed by Testbiotech. For example: one of the new approvals was for a maize variety produced by Bayer (MON 87427 x MON 87460 x MON 89034 x MIR162 x NK603). This maize was crossed several times and therefore inherits several GE constructs. The intention was to produce a maize variety with improved drought tolerance. However, detailed examination of the data provided by industry reveals that the maize never was tested under drought conditions. Instead, during the field trials, irrigation was applied as needed. In addition, only around 900 grams of glyphosate were sprayed onto the plants per hectare during field trials, even though more than three kilograms per hectare are often used in normal agricultural practice.

Consequently, the market approval fails to comply with EU regulation which requests that the field trials are conducted under realistic conditions. The reason: it is known that environmental conditions can have a substantial impact on plant composition and expression of the additionally inserted genes. Therefore, to demonstrate safety of the plants, the field trials need to be performed under conditions which fully represent the conditions under which the plants will be grown. Testbiotech now plans to file a request for revision of the EU Commission decision.

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Further information:

New Testbiotech report on gaps in risk assessment:

www.testbiotech.org/content/risk-assessment-ge-plants-eu-taking-look-dark-side-moon

The media release from the EU Commission:

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/mex_21_190