Media Release

After pressure from industry: EU Commission wants to allow the import of genetically engineered „toxic“ soybeans

Concerns about health risks due to residues from spraying glyphosate in combination with other herbicides

8. April 2016 / In a recent letter to Testbiotech, EU Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis made it clear that the Commission finally wants to allow the import of genetically engineered soybeans produced by Bayer and Monsanto, despite concerns about health risks. These soybeans can be sprayed with a combination of glyphosate and other herbicides such as dicamba or isoxaflutole. The European Food Safety Authority EFSA just recently stated that the health risks of these residues cannot be sufficiently assessed and safety levels cannot be defined since the relevant data are missing. Nevertheless, market authorisation is imminent after massive pressure from industry.

Within the last few months, Testbiotech has received several letters from the Commission about these plants. While it was first argued that safety would be ensured by so-called maximum residue levels (MRL), the Commission has now had to admit that those levels are not sufficiently defined. In fact, they are presented as work in progress, and as the Commission states, no further comment can be given “at this point in time, as the Commission is in the process of establishing its position”.

“This is an alarming case showing how the EU Commission gives in to pressure from industry. Now the Commission has had to admit that the decisive data are missing. But still market authorisation is planned, just to serve the particular interests of Monsanto and Bayer. In regard to human health, the precautionary principle is massively violated by this decision,” Christoph Then says for Testbiotech.

The EU Commission has also announced that in in the EU it is planned to prohibit some highly toxic additives used in commercial mixtures of herbicides. However, it has to be expected that residues from these additives (so-called tallowamines) are still present in the genetically engineered soybeans that are grown in North- and South America, since they are still allowed in these countries.

According to a recent 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 found as residues in the harvest of these crops. In February, the EU Parliament also requested that the authorisation for these soybeans be stopped.

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Further informations:
The recent letter from the EU Commission: www.testbiotech.org/node/1607

The recent letter from Testbiotech: www.testbiotech.org/node/1606

Previous letter from the EU Commission stating that combinatorial effects should be investigated: www.testbiotech.org/en/node/1546

Previous letter from the EU Commission claiming that safe residue levels are set for each of the herbicides: www.testbiotech.org/node/1608

Toxicological dossier about health impacts of the residues: www.testbiotech.org/node/1532

Report about pressure from industry: www.agweb.com/article/elevators-say-no-thanks-to-xtend-soybeans-naa-sonja-begemann/

The vote in European Parliament: www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20160129IPR11955/MEPs-object-to-three-GM-soybean-authorisations