

## Media release



### European Ombudsman demands EFSA admit failure

#### European Food Safety Authority official moved to biotech industry

Munich/ Brussels, 8.December 2011 The European Ombudsman has ruled in favour of a complaint filed by Testbiotech against the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and its approach to the 'revolving doors'. The case concerns a former senior staff member at EFSA, Dr. Suzy Renckens, who was head of the unit responsible for the risk assessment of genetically engineered plants. Dr Renckens then moved to a job at Syngenta, a company that produces and markets these plants. The European Ombudsman has now agreed with Testbiotech's complaint and stated that *"EFSA should acknowledge that it failed to observe the relevant procedural rules and to carry out a sufficiently thorough assessment of the potential conflict of interests arising from the move of a former member of its staff to a biotechnology company."*

"The ruling from the Ombudsman shows in detail that EFSA failed to fulfill its obligations," says Christoph Then from Testbiotech "We are very concerned that both EFSA and the Commission have tried to deny their responsibilities in this case by rejecting our original complaints. The authority and also the European Commission which is backing EFSA are eroding confidence in European institutions. In consequence they are putting at risk the protection of consumers and the environment."

"There have been other cases of staff going through the revolving door; EFSA should look carefully at the ruling and introduce a far stricter approach to conflicts of interest in the future. The Ombudsman makes some important recommendations which should lead to changes in how revolving door rules are implemented across the EU institutions, including at the Commission," said Olivier Hoedeman, from CEO. "We continue to see further scandalous revolving doors cases and it is vital that the EU institutions, starting with the Commission, put improved rules and procedures in place to prevent future conflicts of interest, including a cooling-off period of several years. It is time for a new start. No more business as usual."

The Suzy Renckens case was made public by Testbiotech in November 2009 and the complaint was supported by Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO), Friends of the Earth Europe (FoEE) and Lobbycontrol (in Germany). EFSA now has until 31 March 2012 to respond to the judgement of the Ombudsman who has the power to table the issue in the European Parliament.

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**Link to the report of the Ombudsman:** <http://www.testbiotech.de/en/node/588>

**Link to chronological list of related documents:** <http://www.testbiotech.de/independence>

**CEO's RevolvingDoorWatch can be found here:**

<http://www.corporateeurope.org/projects/revolvingdoorwatch>