



Media release



Warning to EU Member States not to allow new genetically engineered soybeans with resistance to glyphosate for import

Recent assessment of EFSA supports concerns regarding health risks

17 November 2015 / On 18 November, the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed has three applications for the import authorisation of genetically engineered soybeans with resistance to glyphosate on its agenda. These soybeans can be used as food and feed across the EU. Two of these plants have been engineered to be resistant to the combined use of other herbicides and glyphosate. Testbiotech and GeneWatch UK are together requesting that these authorisation processes are suspended.

Their concerns are supported by a recent conclusion of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) on the health risk assessment of glyphosate: In its assessment, EFSA concludes that there is no evidence for the carcinogenicity of the active ingredient glyphosate. But this conclusion explicitly does not include the applications of glyphosate on genetically engineered soybeans or the application of commercial mixtures of glyphosate such as Roundup that contain various additives.

“As EFSA states in its recent conclusion on the risk assessment of glyphosate, residue trials on glyphosate tolerant GM crops were not provided. That is why the risk assessment of EFSA in regard to health effects ‘is limited to conventional crops only’. Further, EFSA states that additives used in many commercial formulations and showing a higher toxicity than glyphosate also have to be taken into account. But as EFSA further states, data on the actual load of residues from these additives are completely missing”, Helen Wallace says GeneWatch UK. “Now the precautionary principle has to be applied and authorisation of these genetically engineered plants has to be suspended.”

In an open letter to the EU Commission, Testbiotech and GeneWatch UK are warning that the genetically engineered soybeans are likely to be sprayed with various formulations used in countries such as Argentina, Brazil and the US, but which have never been approved in the EU. Further, the organisations are warning that the herbicides isoxaflutole and dicamba that can be applied in combination with glyphosate, do leave residues in the crops – and both are known to impact human health.

“The residues resulting from the usage of isoxaflutole are considered to be probably carcinogenic. The combinatorial health effects caused by the mixture of residues might be much more severe than can be expected from the assessment of the single components. But those combinatorial effects were not assessed by EFSA. This is second reason why we are demanding that these authorisations are stopped now”, says Christoph Then for Testbiotech.

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The letter to the Commission: www.testbiotech.org/node/1439

Technical Background: www.testbiotech.org/node/1440

Agenda of the meeting of the experts of Member States in Brussels:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/standing_committees/sc_modif_genet/index_en.htm