

Media release



Stop the uncontrolled spread of genetically engineered organisms: EU countries should take the lead

24 September 2014 / On 29 of September an international conference of the United Nations Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety will start in South Korea. A broad coalition of organisations is calling the participants to take decisive action to stop the uncontrolled spread of genetically engineered organisms into the environment. An international call published in June 2014 was signed by 35 organisations. Testbiotech is demanding that during this important meeting the EU Member States should take leadership for action plans. Such plans could include for example, halting the import of viable genetically engineered oilseed rape kernels into the EU, because of the risk of their uncontrolled spread in the EU environment.

The Cartagena Protocol is part of the global framework of international law together with the Convention on Biological Diversity, and aims to protect biological diversity and human health. It requires Parties to it to take measures against the unintended movements of genetically engineered organisms across its borders. These movements can be caused by human activities or occur spontaneously driven by the biological properties of the organisms. Within the last few years there have been several confirmed cases of the uncontrolled spread of genetically engineered organisms. Amongst those are maize and cotton in Mexico, bentgrass in the US and oilseed rape in Europe, Japan, Australia and North America. Furthermore, companies are planning to release genetically engineered flies that can easily move uncontrolled into the environment and over the borders of many countries.

While the EU has addressed this issue in an official submission to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Testbiotech is demanding more targeted action should be discussed and agreed: “The EU has highlighted some relevant problems such as the uncontrolled spread of genetically engineered insects into the environment, but does not propose any specific initiatives to prevent such releases. We ask the EU and its Member States to take significant steps towards international regulations now, to stop further releases of such organisms”, says Christoph Then for Testbiotech. “We are concerned that the planned free trade agreement TTIP between US and EU might be a reason why the EU does not take a clear position.”

Contact: Christoph Then, tel.: +49 151 54638040, info@testbiotech.org

Link to the international call: www.stop-the-spread-of-transgenes.org/