

# Media release



## EU Commission approves 19 genetically engineered plants for import

Testbiotech to file a complaint

**27 April 2015 / Never before has the EU Commission authorised so many genetically engineered plants for import on just one day. Last Friday, 19 genetically plants were granted market authorisation, 17 for usage in food and feed, and 2 are for flowers (carnations). 10 of the plants approved for food and feed are new authorisations, the others are re-approvals. The overall number of genetically engineered plants that can be imported into the EU for use in food and feed has now risen to 58. Testbiotech plans to file a complaint to set a precedent case.**

“The risks of the genetically engineered plants are not investigated sufficiently and the combinatorial risks factors of these plants if mixed in a diet have not been assessed at all,” says Christoph Then for Testbiotech. “Neglecting to properly assess the risks of genetically engineered plants coupled with mass-authorisation is increasing risks and uncertainties in the food chain.”

Experts from several EU Member States have also criticised the deficiencies in EU risk assessment carried out by the by European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). However, the EU Commission ignored this criticism in its decision making process. Instead, it is suggesting new regulations that would allow each Member State to ban the import of genetically engineered plants. They would not, however, be allowed to use arguments such as health risks to justify their decision. Consequently, it would be almost impossible to defend such national bans against legal challenges.

There are substantial uncertainties about the risk assessment of these plants. For example:

- 7 out of the newly authorised plants have been engineered to be resistant to herbicides. Resistance is to 4 different groups of herbicides. But the residues from spraying and their combinatorial effects were left aside during risk assessment.
- 3 of the soybeans have a changed oil composition, with some claiming benefits to health. However, the real impact on human or animal health has never been tested.
- Maize was genetically engineered to be more tolerant to drought conditions, but there seems to be no advantage in comparison with similar maize varieties derived from conventional breeding. There are particular uncertainties regarding its risks: It is not understood in detail how the gene, which originates from bacteria, functions in the plants, making it difficult to predict unintended side effects. These maize plants also inherit antibiotic resistance marker genes, which according to EU regulations should be avoided.
- Testbiotech is especially critical of the market authorisation for the genetically engineered oilseed rape produced by Monsanto, which is likely to spread uncontrollably into the environment due to transport spillage.

Testbiotech is planning to file a complaint against the decision made by the EU Commission. The organisation has already filed similar complaints in three cases, one of which is pending at the Court of Justice of the European Union.

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The decision of the EU Commission: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-15-4843\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4843_en.htm)

Tabled overview on new authorisations: [www.testbiotech.org/node/1219](http://www.testbiotech.org/node/1219)