# Media release

## EU Commission allows 'toxic soybeans' for import

Health risks of residues from spraying with herbicides not assessed

**24 July 2016 / According to news agencies, the EU Commissionhas allowed the import of genetically engineered soybeans produced by Bayer and Monsanto. The imported soybeans can be used in food and feed despite unresolved concerns about health risks. These crops can be sprayed with a combination of glyphosate and other herbicides such as dicamba or isoxaflutole. Market authorisation has been issued after massive pressure from industry, which already sold its patented seeds in the US for cultivation and now wants to import the harvest to the EU within the next months. The European Food Safety Authority EFSA only recently stated that the health risks resulting from herbicide residues cannot be properly assessed, and that safety levels cannot be defined since the relevant data are missing.**

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 present as residues in the harvested crops. So far, safe residue levels for the herbicides cannot be defined, and there has been no assessment of the combinatorial effects.

“This looks very much like the final rehearsal for the free trade agreements, TTIP and CETA. The biotech industry is already acting as the co-decision maker in Brussels,” Christoph Then says for Testbiotech, “The EU Commission is selling out its credibility for the interests of Monsanto and Bayer. Apparently, the Commission had already promised to authorise the soybeans some months ago, during the talks about the free trade agreements.”

Genetically engineered soybeans awaiting authorisation for import into the EU are cultivated in countries such as Argentina, Brazil and the US, and contain residues from spraying with herbicide formulations with glyphosate as one of the ingredients. Further additives such as tallowamine can be mixed into these formulations and these are known to be much more toxic than glyphosate alone. Usage of these additives is already prohibited in some EU member states. The health risks of these formulations that are allowed in North and South America have never been assessed in the EU. This is a major gap in current risk assessment that was acknowledged for the first time in a letter the EU Commission sent to EFSA in February 2016. This gap still exists even though the EU Commission extended the approval period of the active substance glyphosate.

After the Testbiotech warning, thousands of emails were sent to the EU Commission by active citizens. In February, the EU Parliament also requested that the authorisation for these soybeans be stopped. Testbiotech now is considering to take legal steps against the decision of the EU Commission.

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**Further informations:**

News agency reports EU authorisation of the soybeans:
www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-grains-gmos-idUSKCN10212M

Letter from Testbiotech summarising the flaws in risk assessment: www.testbiotech.org/node/1606

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

EU Commission requests EFSA to assess residues from spraying with glyphosate:
www.testbiotech.org/node/1636

Comprehensive report about flaws in risk assessment of genetically engineered plants:
www.testbiotech.org/en/node/1668