



# PRESS RELEASE

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ESA is the voice of the European seed industry, representing those active in research, breeding, production and marketing of seeds of agricultural and ornamental plant species. It represents 37 national seed associations (and with that more than 1000 seed businesses in the EU, most of them SMEs) and 55 direct company members.

ESA's mission is to work for fair and proportionate regulation of the European seed industry, freedom of choice for customers in supplying seeds as a result of innovative, diverse technologies and production methods and for effective protection of intellectual property rights relating to plants and seed.

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## European Commission approves “Amflora” GMO starch potato Member States shall have more say on GM plantings

**Mixed messages from the Commission regarding the future EU policy for GMOs with 5 executive approval decisions – and a reassurance of Member States that they may not have to apply them...**

Following a 13 years blockage, the European Commission today finally approved “Amflora”, BASF's genetically optimized starch potato, for commercial application in Europe. The potato can now be grown by Europe's farmers and be used for the production of industrial starch. In addition, an authorization for the use of its by-products for animal feed was granted.

“This is a good day for the competitiveness of European plant breeding, European agriculture and Europe's whole agri-food chain!” said Garlich v. Essen, Secretary General of ESA European Seed Association welcoming the decision and underlining that the Amflora potato had successfully passed all required environmental and public health safety assessments. “The product is safe. And as it safe, Europe's farmers and Europe's starch industry should be allowed to use it in their quest for more competitiveness and sustainable production.”

While the plant breeding industry hopes that this decision marks the end to more than a decade of an effective moratorium on authorisations of GMOs in Europe (which had started as early as the late 1990s), ESA is concerned about the mixed policy messages coming with the decision.

“Of course - we certainly hope that today's decision is a true milestone, a fresh start for more innovation in plant breeding, green biotechnology and sustainable agricultural production. But given the declaration from the Commission that accompanied the decision, we are worried that this might be wishful thinking.”, von Essen expresses concern on the political declaration given by Commissioner Dalli.

The Commissioner announced that a proposal that would allow Member States to decide by themselves whether or not to allow GM plantings in their respective country would be forthcoming as early as summer 2010. The seed industry is worried that this will effectively mark the end of the highly successful and competitive common market for seed, an achievement of more than 40 years of EU policy and legislation.

“The common market for seed is a success story for plant breeding and farming in the EU. And it is a success story for the Commission which has consequently implemented and developed the respective legislation.”, von Essen recalls. “We must not come to a situation where the European decision on the marketing of a (GM) product is no more than window dressing as Member States will be explicitly authorised not to apply it.”