

Latest News

Another fine mess... - Europe still can't agree on anything when it comes to GMOs

The Danish Presidency compromise proposal to break the deadlock on rules allowing Member States greater freedom to cultivate GM crops on their territory was shot down by 9 Member States at the latest Environment Council on 9.3.2012. While EU Commissioner John Dalli regretted that the “same old arguments... related to the fragmentation of the Single Market” were reiterated by Member States while currently 10 out of the EU-27 have in fact invoked national safeguard clauses, and added that the “status quo is not an option”, both Council and Commission seem to have no further negotiating options up their sleeves. Danish Minister Auken clearly stated that the Presidency will consider how to proceed but that she would not promise anything at this point.

“It seems Europe can't agree on anything when it comes to GMOs”, Garlich v Essen, Secretary General of European Seed Association commented on this latest failure to finally make the EU's legislative framework for authorisation of GMOs work. And the seed industry is concerned that this fact will also continue to block not only the re-nationalisation proposal but also other GM-related measures such as an extension of the acceptance of presence of GMOs in feed also to food products – and foremost to seed and farmers' fields.

“We are waiting for a practical proposal that would establish a workable tolerance level for GM presence in conventional seed since almost 12 years now.” von Essen points out. “All Europe's seed sector and Europe's farmers have seen are broken promises and continuous delays. Last year, more than 5000 ha of maize were destroyed in Hungary due to an alleged finding of GMOs and because of Europe's 'zero tolerance policy' – without any evidence, any rules or any possibility for redress. This is unacceptable. “

ESA is stressing that the need for such a practical approach to GM presence in conventional seed (similarly to existing rules for feed and, at least in parts, for food) is becoming greater day by day and is not linked to the fate of the re-nationalisation debate. While that's been dragging on since June 2010, the gap between authorisations in third countries and the EU is constantly growing and with that the exposure of agri-food operators to GMOs that are not (yet) authorised in Europe.

“What we now need is leadership from the Commission. It has done everything conceivable, including abandoning Internal Market principles, to accommodate legitimate and –mostly!- illegitimate concerns of Member States; now is the time to move on, put products forward for approval – and give our conventional seed companies and farmers legal certainty with workable tolerance levels and a defined testing protocol.” von Essen calls upon the EU's Executive.