

## **Farm ministers must guarantee the right of the food sector to stay GMO-free**

### ***Organic and GMO-free conventional farmers and food processors need legal certainty***

**Brussels, 27/09/2010** – The Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, John Dalli, presented to the Farm Council today proposals on GMO cultivation from July 13<sup>1</sup> as well as a new “best practice document” for maize<sup>2</sup>.

“Commissioner Dalli is trying to snake his way through crucial GMO policies by attempting to satisfy all conflicting parties with his proposals to the Farm Council this morning. But his approach still fails to solve the main problems”, comments Christopher Stopes, President of the IFOAM EU Group<sup>3</sup>. “Consumers refuse to eat GMOs which is their democratic right. Farmers want to meet the demand for GMO-free food, but they are facing increasing obstacles and costs to do so. Farmers need legal certainty, not only voluntary guidelines, to be able to stay in business. Therefore we call on farm ministers to defend the right of farmers to produce GMO-free food and to push for this legal certainty.”

“Organic farmers in Spain gave up growing maize because of the high contamination risks and the fact that contamination with GMO maize has already happened. Many farmers face enormous costs as they have to import GMO-free and organic maize from abroad to feed their animals according to the organic rules and market demand”, adds Victor González, SEAE Spain; “EU-wide compulsory measures to prevent contamination as well as full liability of those who place GMO on the market for costs that non-GMO growers and processors face are long overdue. To avoid economic and social damage, the potential impacts of a new GMO on the GMO-free food and feed sector must already be considered in the authorisation procedures.”

“The European Coexistence Bureau did an extensive job with its maize best practice document, but we are disappointed by the fact that our concerns about the legal requirement to avoid all contamination in the harvest and about the real costs of e.g. machinery cleaning were not sufficiently considered”, adds Antje Kölling, Policy Coordinator IFOAM EU Group. “If the Commission speaks about coexistence, it must ensure the maintenance of GMO-free food and farming, not give way to commingling up to tolerance thresholds and increasing contamination.”

Ends (characters 2340)

More information:

IFOAM EU Group – phone + 32-2-280 12 23, fax +32-2-735 73 81, email [info@ifoam-eu.org](mailto:info@ifoam-eu.org), [www.ifoam-eu.org](http://www.ifoam-eu.org)

NOTES:

- (1) The **Commission proposals** from July 13:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biotechnology/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biotechnology/index_en.htm)
  - A Communication from the Commission, explaining the new approach on the freedom for Member States to decide on the cultivation of genetically modified crops.
  - A new Commission Recommendation on co-existence of GM crops with conventional and/or organic crops. It better reflects the possibility under the existing legislation for Member States to handle the co-existence of GM and other types of crops. This new Recommendation gives more flexibility for Member States to define such co-existence measures. It allows them, for example, to aim at levels of unintended GMO presence that are lower than the 0.9% labelling threshold of the EU legislation.
  - A proposal to be adopted by the European Parliament and the Council for revising the GMO legislation (Directive 2001/18/EC) as regards the possibility for Member States to restrict or prohibit the cultivation of GMOs in their territory.
  
- (2) European Co-existence Bureau: "**Best practice documents for coexistence** of genetically modified crops with conventional and organic farming" - [1. Maize Crop production](#)
  
- (3) The **IFOAM EU Group** represents more than 300 member organisations of IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) in the EU-27, the EU accession countries and EFTA. Member organisations include: consumer, farmer and processor associations; research, education and advisory organisations; certification bodies and commercial organic companies.  
The IFOAM EU Group outlined its demands on GMO policies in its [Malta Declaration](#) from March 2010.