

# Purely GMO-free seed is precondition for cost efficient GMO-free food production

## *IFOAM EU Group launches study on economics of GMO-free seed*

**Brussels, 26/04/2010** – Cases of contamination in imported seed have become public today in Germany (1). This again stresses the need to apply strictest purity rules regarding the possible presence of GMO in seed. Farmers rely on GMO-free seed. They need to be sure that the seed they buy as non-GMO-seed is truly GMO-free and no bluff package.

To contribute to the ongoing discussion, the IFOAM EU Group (2) launched a study on *“Economic impacts of labelling thresholds for the adventitious presence of genetically engineered organisms in conventional and organic seed”* (3) in the European Parliament today under the patronage of the French MEP and Vice-Chair of Committee for Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Corinne Lepage (ALDE Group).

“Measures to keep GMO out of our food are relatively easier to apply in seed production - due to the smaller production areas involved - than in the production of feed and food crops”, explains Christoph Then (4), author of the study. “GMO-free seed is crucial to enable the food chain to maintain the production of GMO-free food and feed; moreover it is necessary to fulfil legal risk management requirements: withdrawals of GMOs that might become necessary in cases of new scientific findings would become almost impossible if a steady level of contamination would be accepted in seed.”

“Already today food companies face tremendous costs for analyses and prevention measures to keep their production free from GMOs”, emphasises Matthias Stolze (5), co-author of the study. “If GMO contamination in seed up to a percentage of 0.3 or even more would be accepted without any labelling requirements, these costs would further rise. In some cases and in some areas GMO free food production would even become impossible. A labelling threshold for unintended occurrences of GMO in seed must be set at the detection limit to ensure farmers best quality seed for GMO-free production.”

Keeping GMO out of the whole food chain is a necessary undertaking to react to consumers’ demand for GMO-free food. As seed is a bottleneck for food production, costs to avoid contamination in the food chain can only be kept under control if seed stays GMO-free. Breeders and seed producers need a political framework that enables them to produce GMO-free seed – protected GMO-free seed production zones would be an option.

End (characters 2488)

### More information:

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

### NOTES:

- (1) More information:  
<http://www.bioland.de/presse/pressemitteilung/article/658.html>
- (2) 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.
- (3) Within the EU, the option of establishing **labelling thresholds for the adventitious presence (AP) of GE organisms in conventional and organic seed** has been under discussion for several years. The level of the labelling threshold will have profound impacts on the future of farming with respect to the possibility of co-existence and consumer choice. Coexistence costs for farmers and the entire food chain will be influenced by the level of seed purity. The study is available on the website: [www.ifoam-eu.org](http://www.ifoam-eu.org)
- (4) **Christoph Then** is the Director of Testbiotech e.V. **Testbiotech** was founded in 2008 by a group of experts and registered as a non-profit organisation to promote research and public debate on the impacts of biotechnology. [www.testbiotech.org](http://www.testbiotech.org)
- (5) **Matthias Stolze** is the Head of Group "Socioeconomy" in FibL Switzerland. The Research Institute of Organic Agriculture **FiBL** Switzerland is a centre for research and consultancy on organic agriculture. It was founded in 1973. FibL links different fields of research and provides a rapid transfer of knowledge from research to advisory work and agricultural practice. [www.fibl.org](http://www.fibl.org)