

Keep GM potato out of our soup!

The European Commission today cleared the way for cultivation of a GM potato, further raising the cost to the organic sector of remaining GMO-free

Brussels, 02/03/2010 – The IFOAM EU Group⁽¹⁾ strongly criticizes today's decision by the EU Commission to authorise commercial cultivation of the GM potato *Amflora* (owned by BASF) in the European Union. Notwithstanding protests from civil society, the new Barroso Commission has hereby approved the first GM plant for cultivation since 1998!

"If this new potato is widely grown in the European Union, organic and conventional farmers and food processors will **have to face even higher costs keeping food production chains free from GMOs**⁽²⁾", warns Bavo van den Idsert, Vice President representing food processors in the IFOAM EU Group. "These are costs that under current legislation have to be borne by producers wishing to remain GM-free, going against the Polluter Pays Principle." Mr. van Idsert continues, "Although the starch potato is not intended for use as feed and food purposes, it cannot be certain that the tubers, which look like conventional potatoes, will not enter the food chain. Even the European Food Safety Authority had to recognize this in its opinion.⁽³⁾ Currently, GMO potatoes are not grown commercially anywhere on the planet. Potato starch has therefore been until now an alternative to maize starch that was more easily accessible in GMO-free quality."

"Organic farmers want and need to stay GMO-free to survive in business," said Thomas Dosch, Deputy President of IFOAM EU Group. "Barroso has not yet accomplished the tasks set him by the Council of Environment Ministers in December 2008;⁽⁴⁾ no full analysis of socio-economic impacts of growing GMOs has yet been delivered by the Commission. Moreover, there are not yet any binding standards for the assessment of long term risks to the environment as well as human and animal health for the approval of new GMOs in the EU. But the Barroso II Commission with Commissioner Dalli in charge of GMOs carelessly approved a new GMO for cultivation after being in office for only 20 days. This approval is a failed first step for the new Commission's food safety policy. We demand that the European institutions revise this approval!"

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NOTES:

(1) 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.

(2) Costs for food processors to keep their products free from GMOs are rising with each GMO that is on the market; costs to prevent GMO contamination arise for GMO free seed; isolation distances between fields to avoid pollination; cleaning of shared sowing, harvesting, transport, storage and milling facilities; segregation of processing and packaging; withdrawals cost millions (see also

http://www.boelw.de/uploads/media/BOELW_Schadensbericht_Gentechnik090318.pdf)

(3) The EFSA Journal (2006) 324, 1-20, Summary: *However the applicant has concluded that it cannot be excluded that the GM potato and some products of the starch processing may be used as, or be present in food.*

<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/scdocs/doc/324.pdf>

(4) Council Conclusions on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), 2912nd Environment Council meeting, Brussels, 4 December 2008, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/envir/104509.pdf