



Zero tolerance regime for unauthorized GMOs and economic consequences thereof (ORAL QUESTION by Neil Parish, on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development)

The whole EU food and feed chain urgently needs a threshold for the low level presence of GM events, risk assessed by EFSA or by a third country according to Codex plant guidelines. Thus, the EU should follow the Swiss precedent, setting workable thresholds for food and feed.

WHY?

- The EU GMO approval system takes more time than in other countries (average of over 30 months compared to 15 months for example in the USA - see study DG Agri:
http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/envir/gmo/economic_impactGMOs_en.pdf
- At the same time, GM acreage is steadily increasing worldwide, while new GM events are being developed and marketed in exporting countries.
- This situation currently represents a high risk for importers and users of feed coming from countries having approved events, which are still in the EU approval process.
- As a consequence, supply from some countries had to stop, for example maize and maize products from the USA, which had to be substituted, leading to an extra cost of 5 bln € so far for EU livestock farmers.
- This shortfall in supply is one of the key reasons of the current high food and feed prices.
- The absence of tolerances also affects the supply of “non-GM” and organic feed. Even the best Identity Preservation System cannot guarantee a zero presence of not-yet EU approved GM events.
- The danger will be exacerbated by the plantings of the second generation of soybeans, first in the US where seeds are already being multiplied on a large scale and shortly afterwards in South America.
- Imports of US soybeans could be stopped with the beginning of the next harvest (October 2008), because of the EU’s zero-tolerance regime, leading to a further cost increase for EU livestock farmers of up to 2 bln €.
- Therefore, the EU must rapidly set a threshold to avoid that a major part of the EU livestock sector will be transferred to other parts of the world, further increasing the EU’s dependency on imported food.