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Concern over viability of EU livestock sector

The EU livestock industry has been forced into significant losses in the marketing year 2007/2008 with rising grain prices while meat and milk prices have not kept up. The poor harvest 2007 has been the key problem, but the inability to import feedstuffs from around the world had a significant cost impact. New GM maize varieties have been approved and grown elsewhere in the world, but not yet approved in the EU. Zero tolerance on new GM unapproved EU varieties have practically stopped the import of Cornglutenfeed and Distillers Dried Grains (DDGs) as valuable feed ingredients, in a year of shortages.

COCERAL, FEFAC and UECBV sent a [case study report](#) to Commission President Dr Barroso and members of the GM Sherpa group on 9 October 2008, estimating this cost for the livestock industry at 10-15% of the total loss or more than 2.5 Bio €. The situation will get worse, with new GM soya varieties been grown for seed multiplication in 2008 for commercialization in 2009 as a stark warning. New GM soya varieties show significant yield benefits and are likely to be quickly adopted by US and South American farmers.

Soya supplies are critical to the EU livestock industry, and there are real dangers that we will destroy our livestock industry due to lack of raw material supplies, warns the report. Soya products are a vital protein component of animal feeds within the EU. Overall, the EU is 78% dependent on imported vegetable proteins. Soya can only be replaced to a very limited extent either from domestic production or alternative imported products. With soya beans supplies in Argentina and USA being 95-97% GM and in Brazil heading for 80%, the supply chain will quickly lead to the presence of technically unavoidable residues with these new GM varieties. This would apply to non GM as well as GM supplies. A zero tolerance means that imported soya would be severely restricted as shippers will not take the risk in importing

The EU Advisory Group "cereals, oilseeds and protein crops" adopted on 26 September 2008 a [motion](#) calling for the creation of an immediate workable threshold for low-level presence of RR2 soybeans and the creation of a general workable threshold of EU not yet authorised GM events, duly authorised in the exporting countries. The EU Advisory Group concluded that "*The Zero-tolerance policy is impossible to implement ... it has led to de-facto import bans. The situation is likely to worsen as more and more countries are growing GMOs worldwide regardless of the approval process of the EU*".

Regarding the outlook for the marketing year 2008/2009, the report confirms earlier estimates that the EU livestock industry could face a massive loss of competitiveness. As the EU livestock production declines, then imports will increase. Ironically these imports would have been fed these "non-approved" GM products. Therefore, the EU has to take a practical view and implement a workable threshold for GM events, and implement a speedier process for approvals for new GM varieties being grown elsewhere in the world.

Foot notes for the editor

The case study report "Impacts of EU Unauthorised GM's on the feed & livestock sectors" was conducted by Cardy-Brown Co Ltd, (www.cardy-brown.com) on behalf of the following European trade associations:

COCERAL, represents the European Committee of the Cereal and Animal Feed Trade

For more information see our web site (www.coceral.com) or please contact Chantal Fauth, Secretary General Tel. +32-02-502.08.08, Fax +32-2-02-502.60.30, e-mail: secretariat@coceral.com

UECBV, represents the European Livestock and Meat Trading Union.

For more information see our web site (www.uecbv.eu) or please contact Jean-Luc Meriaux, Secretary General Tel. +32-2-230.46.03, Fax +32-2-230.94.00, e-mail: info@uecbv.eu

FEFAC, represents the European Compound Feed & Premix Manufacturers' Federation.

For more information see our web site (www.fefac.eu) or please contact Alexander Döring, Secretary General Tel. +32-2-285.00.50, Fax +32-2-230.57.22, e-mail: fefac@fefac.eu