



## Coexistence of GM and Non GM Crops - The right to choose

### What EuropaBio is asking for:

- Those opposed to GMOs should stop using coexistence as a means to deny freedom of choice to Europe's farmers and consumers by imposing unworkable thresholds and guidelines.
- Member States to permit choice by ensuring they are in compliance with EU law as they develop their rules on coexistence measures.
- To increase the pressure on the Commission to follow through with the Agriculture Council's conclusions in May 2006 and put forward a proposal to establish practical seed thresholds for Adventitious Presence in seeds as a matter of urgency.

### Purpose of this Meeting

To brief MEPs and Permanent Representatives on the challenges for industry relating to Member State implementation on measures to ensure coexistence.

### Introduction

In July 2003, measures for the coexistence of GM and non-GM crops were approved in the European Commission guidelines for the development of national strategies and best practices. These set out a subsidiarity-based approach to help Member States develop national legislative or other strategies for coexistence. The measures are designed to ensure that GM crops can be grown along with non-GM.

Coexistence is already a reality in Europe, with ample experience of successful practices in Spain, the EU Member State that grows the largest area of GM maize. EuropaBio considers that the more European farmers see the benefits provided by crop varieties developed using modern biotechnology, the more they are likely to want to grow them.

### Recommendations

#### 1. Coexistence - Choice or Denial?

Most Member States are still developing national approaches, with specific coexistence legislation adopted in several Member States (including Germany, Denmark and Portugal). On March 10th 2006, the European Commission reported on the national measures to ensure coexistence and made clear that while some Member States have set in place reasonable science-based rules to achieve a fair coexistence regime, others have clearly developed discriminatory and disproportionate measures aimed at denying choice to farmers and consumers. As more novel crops are developed using GM, European farmers would be at a competitive disadvantage in world markets, and the sustainability of the rural economy in Europe would suffer.

EuropaBio calls on MEPs and the European Commission to ensure that the rules which Member States put in place meet the Commission's own guidelines on co-existence published in July 2003. These guidelines provide a rational basis to set in place procedures to meet the statutory labelling requirements. (The guidelines can be found at:

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/03/1096&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>)



## **2. Commission proposal to establish practical thresholds for seeds**

EuropaBio supports the Agriculture Council's recommendation in May 2006 that the Commission establish European-wide thresholds for GM in non-GM seed and develop more in-depth technical guidelines that can be adapted by the Member States to meet their own individual needs as well as practical seed thresholds. It is EuropaBio's position that a practical threshold for seeds is 0.9%.

Successful coexistence will partially depend on establishing practical thresholds for GM material in Non-GM seeds. EuropaBio therefore calls on the Commission to follow the Council's recommendation and put forward a proposal to establish practical seed thresholds as a matter of urgency. EuropaBio asks the Council and the Parliament to support the Commission in this endeavour.

## **3. Science-Based Decision making**

Recent discussions in the EU Council where a proposal to reform EFSA was presented and the recent draft proposal by Commissioner Dimas appear to question the scientific role of the EFSA in the safety assessment of GM products. EuropaBio cautions against any move that would politicise the already established independent science-based safety assessment process. Europeans are increasingly saying they are less and less concerned about GM in food, farmers are also increasingly demanding the right to use the technology, like growers elsewhere around the globe.

Political interference in what should be an independent scientific assessment would harm public confidence in the EU's food safety system. Any move to undermine the EFSA's scientific independence will also damage consumer confidence in all aspects of food safety.

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