

SAVE OUR SEEDS

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Information to the press - for immediate release

EUROPEAN COMMISSION GIVES IN ON GM SEED DIRECTIVE

Change of legal basis of controversial law to allow for contamination of seeds with GMOs

Berlin / Brussels 22. Oct 2003

The European "Save our Seeds" Initiative today celebrates an important, first success regarding the planned Directive on GM seed contamination. As the EU Commission today informed the permanent representatives of the Council, it has changed its legal assessment and accepts that the proposed Directive can only be adopted by a qualified majority of member states within the Standing Committee responsible for deliberate releases of GMOs into the environment (Directive 2001/18).

Until now the Commission intended to push through the GM Seeds Directive under a technical procedure in the Standing Committee on Seeds, where it would have been adopted unless a qualified majority of member states voted against it. A variety of member states as well as the European Parliament had raised reservations about this procedure.

"This is good news for democratic principles," said Benedikt Haerlin, co-ordinator of the Save our Seeds Initiative, "however the proposed contamination thresholds proposed by the Commission remain unchanged. It is now up to the member states governments to ensure that non-gm seeds are truly free of GMOs and to establish strict purity standards."

The EU commission proposes under the GM seed Directive to allow for unlabelled contamination of seeds with genetically modified varieties between 0,3 and 0,7 percent. This would result in massive and uncontrolled releases of GMOs into the environment, even if no farmer intentionally planted such GMOs. GMO free agriculture and food would become virtually impossible.

Under Directive 2001/18 on the deliberate release of GMOs any release of GMOs must be labelled, registered and monitored. Only for food and feed thresholds of 0,9 % have been established, below which the products need not be labelled as genetically modified.

The "Save our Seeds" initiative demands that any GM contamination above the reliable and practical detection limit of 0,1 % must be labelled and the purity of conventional and organic seeds must be strictly protected. It comprises more than 300 farmers, consumers and environmental organisations (with a combined membership of over 25 million citizens) throughout Europe as well as more than 100.000 individual signers of the "SOS-petition".

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