



KOPI

DET KONGELIGE
LANDBRUKS- OG MATDEPARTEMENT

*The Royal Ministry of Agriculture and Food
The Minister*

Mrs. Mariann Fischer Boel,
Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr. Markos Kyprianou,
Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection

Mr. Stavros Dimas, Commissioner for the Environment

Your ref

Our ref
200601881-/LAE

Date
28 .06.2006

The right to choose GMO free production

Dear Colleagues,

Please allow me to bring to your attention some important questions currently on the agenda in the EU. I attach particular importance to the outcome of these discussions for the future development of agriculture and consumer confidence:

- The question of labeling thresholds for adventitious or technically unavoidable traces of GMO in seeds
- The question of segregated production lines of GMO and traditionally/organic produced crops from farm to fork (co-existence)
- The question of labeling threshold for adventitious or technically unavoidable traces of GMO in organic products.

Through the EEA-agreement, the outcome of these issues will also have consequences for Norway.

The Eurobarometer 64.3 (Europeans and Biotechnology in 2005: Patterns and Trends) and 217 (Attitudes of European citizens towards the environment) show results similar to findings in surveys in Norway; a majority of the public are skeptical to GM-food. This skepticism is based on environmental and ethical considerations. Also, the public do not find the existing GM-products useful for them. We could also sense a resignation among the consumers when they express that GMO's can not be avoided no matter what the public says.

In my point of view, it is important to take the above signals from the consumers seriously. It is a political responsibility to ensure a sustainable right to choose - both for the farmers and for the consumers.

In organic production it is a principle that GMO and products produced from or by GMO are not allowed in the production. Hence, most consumers do not expect to find GMO in organic products. This is also confirmed by results from a survey recently carried out in Norway. In my point of view, it is of outmost importance that we respect the organic sector and make it possible to choose a GMO-free production.

The first step to ensure the freedom of choice is to ensure access to GMO-free seeds. In my point of view, the labeling threshold for adventitious GMO presence in seeds should be zero, in practice at the detection limit. This should be priority number one. As seeds are reproductive material, small levels of GMO in seeds will lead to higher levels at a later stage. We still have limited experience in cultivating GM crops. Accepting small levels of GMO in the first place, could lead to the need to accept higher levels at a later stage.

Secondly, appropriate measures to ensure segregation between GM crops on the one hand and organic and conventional crops on the other, is important in order to secure farmer's and consumer's right to choose between GM and conventional or organic products. It is also important to give the necessary time to prepare sufficient co-existence measures. Growing GM-seeds without having the necessary measures to avoid admixture in place, may undermine the ability to choose.

Thirdly, it is crucial that routine contamination is not accepted, i.e. it should be required that the contamination is *unintended* and *technical unavoidable* and this should be kept in mind when measures to ensure co-existence are discussed.

I hope that the points reflected above, would be taken into account in future discussions on these important issues.

Yours sincerely,

Torgny Røs - Johansen

Copy: The European Parliament, Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development,
Att. Mrs. Marie-Hélène Aubert

Norway's embassies in the EU countries