

Adopted resolution

European Commission Approval of GM Potato

On 2nd March 2010. EU Health and Consumer Policy Commissioner, John Dalli (Malta) broke the 12 year old embargo on the commercial growing of GMO crops on EU land, by authorising the cultivation of a genetically modified potato, Amflora, engineered by the German chemical company, BASF.

He chose to do so less than a month after taking office and his actions follow the long-standing aim of Commission President Barroso to impose GMO products on the European market, despite opposition from around 70% of EU citizens and a majority of EU member states.

The potato is intended for the production of industrial starch, using antibiotic resistant marker genes. The antibiotics concerned, kanamycin and neomycin, are in current therapeutic use and are classed by the World Health Organisation as "highly important microbials". The European Medicines Agency has warned of the "critical importance" of these antibiotics and any such industrial use for non-therapeutic purposes will contribute to the increasing prevalence of antibiotic resistance in humans.

The applicable EU legislation, Directive 2001/18 required such antibiotic-resistant marker genes to be phased out by the end of 2008 at the latest (Article 4.2). There are already on the market non-engineered potatoes with similar starch producing characteristics.

No special measures appear to have been proposed to avoid Amflora potatoes being consumed by humans or animals even though the product is not tested nor authorised for human consumption, and it will be impossible to maintain strict segregation without watertight security measures.

The Directive also provides that the geographical location and grid reference of all such commercial GMO releases shall be publicly available.(Annex IIIA-part IIIB-1). Those countries reported to be planning immediate cultivation are Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and Czech Republic.

The EGP Council

1. Condemns the decision by Commissioner Dalli, who clearly cannot have had the time to fully evaluate the dossier.
2. calls for full transparency in the evaluations committees by publication of all members with special interests.
3. Demands that the Commission reconsiders its decision in the light of the requirement that such antibiotic resistance marker genes be phased out by a deadline already passed and the availability of equivalent non-GM potatoes.
4. Fully supports those countries-Austria, Greece, Luxembourg, France, Italy, Hungary, Malta- which have already declared that they will ban the cultivation of the Amflora potato and strongly encourages other countries to follow their lead.
5. Calls for full transparency in the event that these crops are cultivated in Germany Netherlands, Sweden or the Czech Republic or elsewhere, such transparency measures to include the publication of the exact location and timing of all plantings so that local citizens and other farmers can take evasive action.
6. Will support an EU- wide consultation and/or European Citizen's initiative for a general GMO prohibition in collaboration with civil society and NGOs.

