

## COOP - ITALY POSITION ON THE USE OF GENETIC ENGINEERING IN THE AGROINDUSTRIAL FIELD

### **Coop's policy on GMOs**

Coop believes that genetic engineering could represent a new, great opportunity for mankind, in particular if applied to the medical field to treat diseases, but more guarantees are needed to employ these technologies in the agroindustrial sector, and the precautionary principle should prevail.

This is not at all an attitude of refusal, but rather a request for strengthening research (in particular public research) in advance so as to adequately evaluate possible adverse effects.

### **Coop's System of guarantees for the production process**

Coop has planned and carried out a System of guarantees aimed at assuring Consumers of the non-use of maize, soya and their GMO by-products in the manufacturing of Coop Brand products.

The Supplier, on the basis of these guidelines, carries out an accurate analysis on:

- raw materials;
- sources of supply;
- production process characteristics;
- ability to guarantee Coop's requirement.

Thus Coop has selected reliable suppliers of raw materials, and has drawn up control plans on them as well as on raw materials and finished products

### **Coop's controls**

Coop regularly controls the correct application of guidelines by its suppliers by means of audits and inspections, carrying out products tests in qualified laboratories, which are continuously monitored.

Coop's Laboratory has a molecular biology sector equipped with the most advanced instruments (PCR Real Time), which is also accredited by Sinal for GMO maize and soya surveying methods.

Coop is also cooperating with national and foreign scientific bodies to update the procedures.

In addition to an intense product control plan, a strong process control has been carried out, aiming at supply chain agreements characterized by traceability up to the origin, for raw materials and animal feedstuffs.

We have thus drawn up agreements and technical specifications with feedstuff factories, breeders and slaughterhouses and – as a further element of consolidation- Coop pays breeders a bonus above the market price, in recognition of the higher costs of “GMO-free” feeding. Breeders must in fact supply exclusively from feedstuff factories previously approved by Coop; in their turn, feedstuff factories must stock from qualified suppliers of raw materials.

### **Normative evolution**

Over the last months we have seen significant legislative developments regarding genetically modified organisms.

Apart from the strong economic impacts, the position of Coop is that accepting the actual contamination of Italian agricultural systems as technically inevitable cannot be reconciled either with Coop policies for the protection of Italian productions, characterized by typically small quantities and high quality, nor with the right of farmers and consumers to information.

Coop asks for strict rules on distances and segregation, to avoid contamination between GMO-free, organic and traditional chains, and for the costs of such operation to be charged to farmers cultivating transgenic plants.

Local authorities/governments should be also granted the right to decide a possible GMO cultivation ban in their territories, as already been done by over 1300 councils and 13 counties.

### **Scientific research**

Coop has decided to give a powerful sign of commitment and responsibility as regards research.

A research project was launched, in collaboration with three prestigious Universities: the Department of Environmental Sciences of the University of Parma, with Prof. Nelson Marmioli, the Department of Animal and Genetic Biology of the University of Florence, with Prof. Marcello Buiatti, and the Department of Agricultural Economics and Engineering of the University of Bologna, under the supervision of CINSA, the National Inter-university Consortium for Environmental Sciences.

The triennial research regards the possible impacts of GMO cultivations with respect to the specific agroindustrial reality of our country, both in terms of possible contamination between traditional and organic cultivations and as evaluation of the costs for the separation of agricultural chains that would fall on the various actors, from farmers to final consumers. The first data on genetic flow confirm the necessity of wide protection strips to avoid contamination of neighbouring crops. Finally, scientific studies highlight that, with respect to the mycotoxins issue, transgenic crops – except for fumonisin – provide reductions that are not significant or that are most related to: type of event, climatic and agricultural conditions etc..

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