

New Spanish coexistence proposals: july 2005

Very brief comments by EHNE

- this latest version was presented to the mass media with absolutely no previous consultation with social movements, including farmer organizations, even though the Minister for Agriculture had promised otherwise.
- the latest version does not differ substantially from previous ones and there are still serious defects:
 - no mention of responsibility, for example through application of the polluter pays principle.
 - Seed firms selling GM varieties (seed or other plant material) are still exempted from responsibility
 - Coexistence is still considered from the angle of permissible thresholds and not in terms of preventing pollution. As such the proposals do not even guarantee the technical zero for pollution which is vital for noGM farming.
 - The measures, which still pose serious problems regards preventing GM contamination, will not permit the right of farmers to chose the production model they wish, or the right of consumers to chose the type of food stuffs they wish.
 - There is no provision for the right to declare GM-free regions.
 - The specific measures for maize are inefficient and insufficient. The distance has been increased to 50m, but maize pollen can travel much further. Additionally this distance is established on the basis of complying by legislation of thresholds for labelling conventional food stuffs affected by accidental GM pollution and does not bear in mind the need of organic farmers for total absence of GM pollution.
 - The obligations of farmers cultivating GM varieties, both regards information and complying by distances, is ambiguous as they refer to outlying fields and are not defined for fields that are not contiguous but are within the established distance.
 - The articles on sanctions are still ambiguous and do not clearly establish the type and degree of infringement
 - The proposal allows Regional Governments to establish more restrictive measures but this will give rise to legal insecurities and difficulties for boundary areas.
- the proposal was not given the go ahead, so we are still in the pre-coexistence phase, but with GM crops being grown.