

GMO-paper

The approach of Upper Austria as a GMO-free Region & the approach of the Network of GMcrop-free Regions in Europe 10+2

A. The Upper Austrian approach:

- Legal provisions aiming a total ban of cultivation of GMOs and of seeds and plants containing GMOs as well as the breeding and release of transgenic animals in the whole Region (approx. 12.000 km²)
- Clear positioning of the small-scale agriculture with highest quality of agricultural products
- A responsible coexistence of organic, traditional farming systems and GMOs **is currently not seen to be possible** within the current legal framework and methods of farming,
- Freedom of choice of the farmer and the consumer must be ensured on a regional level, related to countryside-specific conditions and different environmental conditions, having in mind the **principle of subsidiarity** (and the **right of self-determination** of Regions),
- Neither the existing scientific studies and results nor the existing European (legal) framework conditions (labelling and tracability) are enough so far to solve all open questions on coexistence for everybody involved in an acceptable manner,
- **Polluter-pays-principle** and the **precautionary principle** are the most important and most relevant principles every communication, recommendation, decision, directive or regulation has to follow
- Currently there are **more open questions and unsolved problems on coexistence than scientifically proofed answers**, legal solutions or clear answers to all actors the involved sectors.

B. The approach of the Network of GMcrop-free Regions in Europe 10+2

The Regions of Tuscany and Upper Austria have started the process of regional co-operation on 4th november 2003 with the founding of a network of GMcrop-free Regions in Europe, **to work together on common solutions** on a regional level:

- The right of self-determination
- Realisation of the subsidiarity principle and act with political responsibility for the population
- Work out of best and adequate and country/Regions-specific solutions on coexistence, which could differ in different areas of Regions in Europe,
- **Coexistence is not only** a socio- or macro-economic problem (for organic and traditional farmers) and cannot be reduce to be only a commerical problem, because it is related to **a lot of open questions** (i.e. cost factors along the feed and food chain, civil liability for property damage or economic loss from adventitious presence of unwanted GM material/traits from neighbouring properties in crops or wild relatives, assurance (and re-assurance), geografical, proportional and crop-specific solutions, thresholds, buffer zones and isolation distances facing a natural phenomenon, sources and factors of possible contaminations, voluntary agrrements between farmers are not enough, rights and obligations on information for everybody involved, positive and negative labelling, ethical factors, etc.)
- Ensure high quality of agricultural products and the geografical origin and specificities of traditional and organic products,
- Precautionary principle, to avoid irreversible negative influences, contaminations, impacts and implications for the environment to ensure the main objectives biodiversity, protection of outstanding ecosystems and biological diversity of species,
- Contribution of the Regions to discuss all open questions and finding solutions and clarifications on coexistence

Regions involved in the Network: Aquitaine (FR), Basque Country (ES), Burgenland (AT), Highlands and Islands (UK), Limousin (FR), Marche (IT), Upper Austria (AT), Salzburg (AT), Schleswig-Holstein (DE), Tuscany (IT), Rodopi-Evros + Drama-Kaval-Xanthi (GR) and Wales (UK)

Common activites so far:

1. kick-off Conference 4th november 2003 in Brussels,
2. Regional Conference on 28th of april 2004 in Linz (Upper Austria),
3. Co-operation on coexistence together with AER (Assembly of European Regions) and the EP (14th september 2004),

4. Regional Conference in Florence on 4th february 2005
as a regional input and contribution to the European debate and search for solutions on coexistence.

C. Further supporting organisations on GM-free and/or coexistence:

EP, EESC, AER, Committee C, NGOs: gen-net, zsl/sos, Greenpeace, FoE, AbL, Bioland etc.

D. Council of Ministers: Initiative of 11 EU-MS to install a European Task Force on Coexistence = Joint declaration of Austria, Italy, Denmark, Estland, Greece, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Cyprus + FRG in annex II of the Conclusions of the Agricultural Council on 11th of october 2004

E. Main aspects:

- ⇒ Take-over of regional political responsibility to ensure (if possible) coexistence for every farming system and introduce regional measures (following Art 26a of Directive 2001/18/EC) to avoid the presence of GMOs on other products,
- ⇒ Precautionary principle is the most important to avoid irreversible measures/damages and priority for the polluter-pays-principle to ensure
 - a. Biodiversity, lively ecosystems without contamination and biological diversity of species
 - b. (Legal) framework conditions on coexistence between the farming systems
- ⇒ Coexistence is not only a socio- or economic problem (for organic and traditional/conventional farmers), but also a question of mutual influences on farming, products, implications to the environment, consumer aspects, freedom of choice etc.
- ⇒ Highest quality of agricultural products,
- ⇒ Trust and confidence of consumers in food and feed,
- ⇒ Realistic chances for all farmers, traditional and organic ones
- ⇒ Synergy-effects between measures of Regions, Member States, actions of NGOs and regulations of the European Institutions
- ⇒ Europe is more or less GM-free until now in cultivation, the regional initiatives are an expression of subsidiarity and concerns.

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