

Movement for GMO-free Greece

Since the early nineties of the last century a permanent flow of information about genetic engineering was provided to the Greek public by a wide range of organizations, media and individuals. The introduction of GMOs into the food chain is highly refused by Greek consumers (93 %). Greek people prefer their own traditional food, which provides identification and happiness and expresses the cultural and natural heritage. About 20% of the whole area is officially protected by conventions like *Natura 2000*, *Ramsaar* and National Parks because of their unique biodiversity. The systems of agriculture are characterized by extremely small holdings (average acreage 4,3 ha), so any model of coexistence of conventional or organic agriculture with the farming systems of modern biotechnology - is excluded.

In the past the political leadership - in order not to risk the rural economic balance (agriculture, food processing, tourism, environment) - was forced, to follow this opinion, in spite of biotechnology promotion by the establishment of conventional agriculture, management and research (National Foundation of Research).

The Contribution of DIO

DIO is an Inspection and Certification body for organic products. It provides permanent information to the organic farmers and the whole organic sector:

By articles and news in the periodical, flyers, meetings, Conferences, inspection and control of seed input, animal feed and ingredients in organic production chain.

DIO is member of GENET since 1994.

Green peace

Fighting against genetic engineering in agriculture and food is one of the key issues of the Greek office of Green peace. Successful steps are: the moratorium of 1998, information of the public by media events, the position of Greek food processors and retailers refusing GMO in their products, the consumers guide for GMO-boycott, the detection of contaminated propagation material and contaminated cultivations, occupations of GMO contaminated feed and seed import companies, the Greek law against contamination 2001, lobbying politicians and government for GMO free Greece.

Greek Network against GMOs

Oktober 2003: The local initiatives of Thessalonica, Thessaly, Crete and Athens, coordinate their activities to set up a network of organizations, institutions and persons who work along the food chain, in research and media all over the country in order to increase political power. More than 200 organizations join the campaign, signing a common declaration.

November 2003: begin of the campaign, addressed to the local governments (Municipalities and Prefectures)

April 17. 2004: foundation of the *Greek Network against GMOs*.

During 2004 every of the 54 Prefectures, which cover the whole country and islands, votes an official rejection of GMOs in agriculture and food.

The members of the network are the local existing environmental movements and big international organizations like Green peace, Fo Earth, the Greens, organizations of organic and conventional farmers, consumers, doctors, NGOs for human rights, for citizens aware, the Social Forum and institutions of food processing and distribution as well as representatives of the scientific community etc.

Activities of the Network

2004 Campaign for declaration of GmO free Municipalities and Prefectures

Oct.15. 2004 Open letter to Minister president Karamanlis:

“.....to declare all the country GmO free zone..” according to peoples choice, the legal impact of the Biosafety Protocol and the precaution principle.

Nov. 29. 2004 Protest letter against the EU Commissions attempt to lift the existing national GmO bans in 5 European countries, handing over the document at the EU office in Athens accompanied by more than 6000 signatures of citizens and organizations.

Aims of the Greek Network

No GmOs in Greek farm production (plant – and animal products)

Consumers boycott against GmOs in the food chain

Call for legal binding right to ban GmOs from market

Zero – GmO contamination in seeds

Support of GmO free Greek quality products and environmental friendly agriculture

Chronology of official statements in 2003 /2004

Nov. 2003: The Greek region Thrace-Rodopi signs the declaration of 10 European regional authorities for “GmO free regions”.

Oct.20. 2003 The Greek Union of Organic Farmers Associations (O. E. B. E, Tripolis) votes a statement for: GMO-free Greece, strict regulations on EU level for reliability in case of contamination on polluter pays principle and zero level for seed contamination.

Dec.06 2003: Union of Greek district governments / prefectures (E. N. A. E.) votes for a common refusal of GmOs in agriculture and on the food market, supporting the national quality food production.

Dec.10. 2003 Statement of Doctors Association, Thessaloniki: “...there is no scientific methodology for risk evaluation for GmOs ...”

June 03. 2004 E.N.A.E. condemns the contamination of maize fields by GmO propagation material in several Districts of Greece

June 30. 2004 The Panhellenic Confederation of Unions of Agricultural Cooperatives (Π.Α.Σ.Ε.Γ.Ε.Σ.) decides on its General Assembly a very strong position against GmOs in farm production: “.....the future of our planet cannot coexist with GmO in agriculture..”

July. 06. 2004 E.N.A.E. demands governmental support for an effective control of seeds and legal binding rules for liability in case of contamination of farm products and environment.

October 2004: Greek National Commission for Human Rights (E. E. Δ. A.) publishes statement and proposal in case of a deliberate release of GmOs in the market.

Dec. 17. 2004 E.N.A.E. votes again for strict implementations of the precaution principle, guarantee of free choice for GmO-free agriculture, - environment and -food, requests government and society to enact the necessary measures.