

GM FREE FOOD TO BE LABELLED IN MOSCOW

20 February 2007, Moscow. The Moscow government strengthens control over GM foods. At the end of last week, mayor Yury Luzhkov signed the regulation, which allows producers to test their products for genetically modified organisms (GMO). If a product tests negative, the products will be labeled as GMO free. According to Greenpeace experts, the new regulation will be an effective tool for making Moscow a “GMO free zone”.

The regulation recommends that producers, suppliers and retailers “refrain from production, supplies and sales of GM food products in the territory of Moscow”. Greenpeace considers this to be one of the most important provisions.

“This means that Moscow authorities have finally come to the decision to support political declarations with real actions and bring to life the idea of making the capital a GMO free zone” – says Natalia Olefirenko, Greenpeace GE campaigner.

The Department for the Consumer Market and Services of Moscow (DCSS) will issue free licenses to use the label. All a producer has to do is to submit its product for analysis at a DCSS laboratory and to get a certified result. The license will be valid for a year and can be renewed by repeating test. Food labeled “GMO free” will go on sale starting from 1 July 2007.

“The proposed reverse labeling is much more effective than the “contains GMO” label, says Natalia Olefirenko. The latter proved to be ineffective: most producers “forgot” to mention the presence transgenes in their products. That is why Greenpeace repeatedly insisted on introducing the “reverse” labeling. Evidently, a new label will be popular with producers and will help consumers to make choices while shopping in Moscow”.

50 million roubles were allocated in the 2007 budget for implementing the program. The funds will be used to purchase more equipment for laboratories and to conduct full scale tests of food products.

It is noteworthy that the regulation was developed with the participation of non-governmental organizations and provides for active involvement of NGOs at all stages of food market monitoring.

In addition, the regulation instructs the supervisory bodies to make public the results of all tests, including a list of producers concealing information about GMO in their products.

“We also hope that the Moscow authorities do everything possible to ensure that the planned tests are not used in the competitive struggle between companies”, concludes Natalia.