

The first GMO free region in Bulgaria

AGROLINK Association, GMO free Bulgaria coalition and Municipality of Satovcha announce the declaration of the first GMO free municipality in Bulgaria. The GMO free zone declaration commits the municipality administration to the extent of its legal and organisation powers, to cultivate no genetically modified organisms (GMOs) on municipality land.

The local authority together with other organizations and institutions will use all suitable measures such as discussion and education work to convince farmers and land owners in their area not to cultivate or set free GMOs on their given land. The municipality of Satovcha supports the Bulgarian Genetically Modified Organisms Act (2005) which protects nature protected territories and their 30 km buffers zone and asks national government to ensure that in all Bulgaria no genetically changed organisms may be cultivated or released neither now nor in the future.

Also Satovcha municipality as a future part of European Union also believes that in order to protect our local economy, culture, environment and health of our citizens, EU law must guarantee the rights of the farmers who want to produce GM-free crops are in future legally protected and that all suitable measures are employed in order to avoid any GM contamination of their land.

Satovcha municipality is located in the western part of Rhodope Mountain, cross border area between Bulgaria and Greece. The population amounts to 18997 residents in a surface area of 334 245 sq km.

The GMO campaign in Bulgaria is funded by the Grassroots Foundation, Germany. The aim of the project is to continue raising public awareness on the risks of genetic engineering, to watch on the implementation of the new law and future law amendments and to work with local authority in Rhodope Mountain to become a part of GM free Europe (1).

The Bulgarian GMO law (2) is more stricter then EU legislation and forbid to cultivate GM modified crops as tobacco, rose for oil, grapevines, vegetables and fruits, cotton and wheat, the first three crops even excluded from genetically modification in controlled environments.

The law safeguard protected areas in the National Ecological Network and their 30-kilometers surrounding belt, and organic farms and their neighboring fields against GM-crops. The deliberate release into the environment and the placing on the market of any GMOs containing antibiotic resistance marker genes is hereby prohibited.

However, one year after the adaptation of the law the responsible Commission for permission for the release of GMO into environment has been not set up. The biotech companies and lobby are very active in advertising and even publicly declare that Bulgarian farmers wish to grow GMO crops.

Svetla Nikolova, chairman of AGROLINK said: "We have chosen the Rhodope Mountain to start our campaign because of its amazing beauty and the traditional way of life of the local people. They decided to protect and preserve their lands. We want to protect our farmers against the global commercial interests to introduce GM crops in rural areas. We will continue our campaign to announce the whole mountain free of GMO since it is a land of great environmental and historical importance and we want to save it for the next generations."

Dr Mimenov, the mayor of the municipality signed the declaration expressing the will of all residents of the municipality. Organic herb grower, Tcachev said: "I am the first organic farmer in the area but there are others who want to plant organic and non-GMO crops. We do not need GMOs".

Contact:

Svetla Nikolova, AGROLINK Association

www.agrolink.org

agrolink@bgnet.bg

gmlink@bluelink.net

+ 359 2 846 6675

Notes to editors

(1) <http://www.gmofree-europe.org>

(2) http://www.moew.government.bg/index_e.html