

GMO-Free Europe 2010

6th European Conference of GMO-Free Regions, Brussels and Ghent, 16th- 18th September 2010

From the 16th to the 18th of September representatives of local, regional and national initiatives as well as organizations of farmers, environmental activists, consumers and critical scientists will meet in the European Parliament in Brussels. Together, they will discuss strategies and campaigns for GMO-free agriculture and food. We expect approximately 300 participants from all EU member states and surrounding European countries as well as guests from China, India, the USA, Japan and Africa.

T h e b i o t e c h i n d u s t r y ' s n e w s t r a t e g y

Europe is preparing for heated GMO debate this fall. The new EU Commissioner John Dalli, whom President Barroso has made solely responsible for GMO matters, will attempt to pave the way for more genetically modified plants. His first act in office was to authorize the genetically modified Amflora potato from BASF against the majority of governments and despite considerable scientific concerns. Authorizations of new genetically modified maize varieties are expected to follow this fall, and the heretofore strict ban of non-authorized genetically modified plants is expected to be relaxed. The Commission will also propose that member states be allowed to ban GMO cultivation within their country. Finally, thresholds for the so called "adventitious and technically unavoidable" contamination of conventional seed could be legalized making GMO-free cultivation practically impossible.

E u r o p e a n r e g i o n s b a n t o g e t h e r i n B r u s s e l s

The broad majority of European citizens has declared a desire for healthful, GMO-free foods. If the successful regional citizens' movements in Europe are able to make themselves heard in Brussels and coordinate their activities, they can prevail. We will counter the biotech industrial lobby and the dangerous hope of many politicians of overcoming social and environmental problems with a technical panacea instead of their own hard work with clear demands and practical alternatives.

V i s i o n s o f t h e f u t u r e o f f o o d a n d a g r i c u l t u r e

The broad majority of Europeans wants healthful and sustainably produced, GMO-free food. But this is about more than just the risks of a certain technology. The debate surrounding the reform of the EU Common Agriculture Policy, which will shape the landscape of agricultural policy for the next decade, is entering its most decisive phase. Our demands for strengthening small farmers, sustainable rural development, and fair, regional quality products not produced to the detriment of the climate, biodiversity or developing countries, are at odds with the concept of a "knowledge based bio-economy". Through the use of new technologies and global market pressures, the oil, chemical and food industries are attempting to relegate farmers to the roles of suppliers of renewable raw materials for their production and of sub-contractors for their "green factories" and bio-refineries. Patents on life, "intellectual property" of gene sequences and naturally occurring characteristics is supposed to speed this process. Food, agrofuels and cropland have become international objects of speculation on the stock market. A closing of ranks between farmers and consumers could also steer the next CAP reform negotiations out from behind the agro-chemical lobbyists' closed doors and into a democratic light as well as overcome the boundaries of national self-interest.

After the public debate in the European Parliament, these topics will provide sufficient discussion material for the retreat in Ghent, where the participants of GMO-free Europe 2010 will spend two day making plans and discussing future perspectives.

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