



Save Our Seeds

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Deregulation of new genetic engineering: the debate has only just begun

Berlin 7 February 2024 Following the European Parliament's vote on the planned deregulation of new genetically engineered plants, Benedikt Haerlin from "Save Our Seeds", the European initiative for GMO-free agriculture said

'Today's vote by the European Parliament in favour of deregulating the EU's existing GMO legislation was sad news for Europe's agriculture and environment, for the freedom of choice of Europe's consumers, for the precautionary principle and for an enlightened and critical approach to new technologies and the respectful treatment of different forms of cultivation and nutrition.

However, today's surprisingly narrow and sometimes contradictory vote in the Parliament is not the end of the debate on honesty, precaution and transparency in the use of genetic engineering on Europe's fields and plates. It has only just begun in the wider public arena.

With a narrow majority, the EP today called for all new genetically engineered products to be labelled. This is a serious setback for the otherwise successful campaign of the industry lobby, which had previously equated labelling and thus freedom of choice for consumers with a ban on the marketing of their products. Parliament's demand to make the new genetically engineered products traceable and to allow for banning them should doubts arise about their safety is also not what the initiators of the deregulation had in mind.

However, the good news of the day is that the EU member states in their Council of Permanent Representatives did not agree on a common position on the Commission's deregulation proposal. This is a serious blow to the industry and its allied anti-ecological front of Christian Democrats, Liberals and the more or less extreme right. The decision will probably only be made after the European elections and the summer break.

Meanwhile, the increasingly clear scientific criticism of the Commission's and Parliament's concept will deepen. The questionable promise to prevent the patenting of genetically engineered seeds will be legally checked. There will be time to thoroughly reconsider the actual risks and possible consequences of complete deregulation. During the election campaign, millions of voters will be able to scrutinise the position of their MPs.

Despite the disappointment of today's narrow vote, there is still hope. After all, today has made it clear that not only the majority of European citizens, but also a strong minority in their parliament continues to stand up for freedom of choice, precaution and respect for farmers and their diverse cultivation methods. We will do our best to ensure that reason and understanding in the democratic handling of new genetic engineering techniques ultimately succeed.