

3rd European Conference on GMO-free Regions,
Biodiversity and Rural Development
Brussels, 19/20 April 2007

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I represent the Moscow City Duma Commission on Healthcare and want to share our experience in legislative regulations that prevent the expansion of products, containing GMOs.

Today, the Russian Federation is the most open country for the import of products containing GMOs. The flood of GM-products has increased especially in the last three years. This can be explained by the restrictions on GMOs in European countries. According to the experts, we receive about 500 thousands tons of GMOs each year.

There are several state documents that directly and indirectly regulate the import, manufacture, distribution and sale of products containing GMOs:

- The Russian Federation law "On State Regulation of Genetic Engineering Activities"
- The Government Order "On the State Registration of Animal Feed, manufactured from genetically-modified organisms"
- The Government Order "On the State Registration of genetically-modified organisms"
- The Ecological Doctrine of Russia
- Priorities of the State Biodiversity Policy
- The Russian Federation Law "On the Protection of Consumer Rights", Art. 10:

"Labels on goods (including works and services) should contain: (...) concerning food stuffs: information on the make-up of the food (including the name of the food ingredients and food additives used during manufacturing, biologically active additives, and information on the presence of components produced with the application of genetically-modified organisms)"

It should be mentioned, that the part of the Law "On the Protection of Consumer Rights" which requires companies to acknowledge whether their products contain GMOs didn't work due to the lack of resources of the Rospotrebnadzor - Russian Consumer Control. You will never find any label of this kind, however when these products are tested in laboratories, GMO components are often found.

Gennady Onischenko - Chief Sanitary Physician of the RF, and the head of the Federal service supervising protection of consumer's rights and well-being of the person (Rospotrebnadzor), wrote an official letter dated 24/01/2006 "On Labeling of Foods Containing GMOs". He says: "All foods and animal feed are to be labeled, if they contain more than 0,9% of GMOs". Unfortunately, in Russian reality this barrier "0,9" is quite degraded due to weak state control. It turns out that there is a loophole which negates the necessity of labeling products as containing GMOs. Russian Consumer Control cannot cope with the workload due to the lack of laboratories and professional staff. Administrative officials at the Russian Institute of Nutrition often give interviews in national newspapers, where they say, that harm from GMOs is not yet evident.

However, we know that this Institute has carried out experiments, but released only positive results.

The Moscow Authorities are not satisfied with this situation concerning GMOs, so they have passed their own local measures. Liudmila Stebenkova, head of the Moscow City Duma Commission on Healthcare, initiated a political discussion on GMO regulation. During the last year, we have organized round tables, hearings, and sessions of the commission dedicated to this problem.

All our initiatives in this field were supported successfully by both political authorities (notably by the Mayor of Moscow – Uriy Lujkov) and NGOs (Association of Biological, Ecological and Food Safety). The result was acceptance of an amendment to Moscow City's law "On Food Safety in Moscow". It prohibits buying products containing GMOs with public funds. It's not a really big step, but it's a move toward making Moscow a truly GMO-free zone. Additionally, the Moscow government has allocated funds for establishing 16 independent laboratories for GMO-exposure in products. Beginning on July 1st, 2007 any Muscovites can request that a product be checked free of charge. All laboratories use quality methods and results are made available to the public.

Then the Moscow City Duma and the Moscow Government supported the scientific experiments of Russian scientist Irina Ermakova. Mrs. Ermakova is a doctor of biology, a leading scientist from the Institute of Higher Nervous Activity and Neurophysiology RAS, and an expert in the NATO-Russia scientific cooperation (Committee on Science for Peace and Security). She is one of the only scientists in the world to investigate the influence of GMOs on future generations (or posterities). When female rats were fed GM-soy (Ready Roundup, line 40.3.2), it led to the high mortality rate of rat pups (more than one half) and poor development in surviving pups (they were sick and weighed less than the pups from control groups). Pathological changes were found in the testes (семенники) and livers (печень) of males fed with GM-soy seeds. Scientists did not succeed in breeding a second generation. Obtained data are shocking. The results of her experiments were published and can be found easily on the Internet.

The new experiment, which is due to start in 2008, will be completely open and available for the public.

The next step was the Governmental Order of Moscow dated February 17, 2007, in which manufacturers are encouraged to label their products "GMO free" The system of voluntary labeling will start on July 1, 2007.

Thank you!