



European Plant Science Organisation
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Statement

GMO cultivation - national opt-out

Brussels, 26.2.2015

On June 12th, the EU approved a proposal that was approved by the European Parliament on 13 January 2015 (still to be ratified by the Council) that would give Member States the right to opt-out from planting GM events that have received a favourable opinion from EFSA, even if they have no science-based grounds for doing so.

The current position is as follows.

First, based on review of extensive analysis and datasets compiled in a substantial dossier, EFSA expresses an opinion on whether or not there is any indication that a proposed GM crop trait would produce any risk for human or animal health or to the environment.

Second, if EFSA expresses a favourable opinion on a trait, the Commission and the Council of Ministers evaluate whether or not to accept the EFSA recommendation.

Third, currently each Member State can prohibit the cultivation of a GM crop if it can advance what it regards as a compelling scientific rationale to not plant it. EFSA also expresses an opinion on these arguments against adoption, and in all cases so far has found these arguments to be without scientific merit.

The proposed change in policy will enable Member States to opt-out of planting a GM crop on political or cultural grounds.

Currently, many events on which EFSA has expressed a favourable opinion have been blocked from EU-wide approval by the Council of Ministers failing to reach a qualified majority approval, with the result that the proposal then is blocked by the European Commission. This is because some EU countries are so opposed to GM methods that they will veto these GM events to ensure they are not obliged to plant them. This is unfair on countries that are comfortable with GM crops, and would welcome the chance to plant the next generation of GM crop improvements.

EPSO would welcome the Commission-proposed change in authorization for opt-out by Member States on other than scientific reasons. Member States should not be in a position where i) they feel they must block the whole EU from adopting a technology just because they do not wish to adopt it themselves ii) they question the scientific assessment done by EFSA. It is essential that the EFSA remains the final authority in the science-based assessment about the merits or otherwise of any particular GM event proposed for planting in Europe.

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Useful links

EPSO Working Group on Agricultural Technologies: www.epsoweb.org/agricultural-technologies-wogr

Statements drafted by this group and approved by the EPSO representatives are for instance:

- EPSO statement on Crop Genetic Improvement Technologies, 26.2.2015
- EPSO statement on Plant Breeders' rights and patent rights, 26.2.2015

- EPSO statement on GMO cultivation – national opt-out, 26.2.2015

EPSO [Science Based Policy](#), 1.9.2013

EPSO member institutes and universities: www.epsoweb.org/membership/members

EPSO representatives: www.epsoweb.org/membership/representatives

About EPSO

EPSO, the European Plant Science Organisation, is an independent academic organisation that represents more than 220 leading research institutes and universities from 28 European countries, Australia, Japan and New Zealand. EPSO's mission is to improve the impact and visibility of plant science in Europe.

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