

Press release

Should GM crops be grown in the EU? Let the countries decide for themselves

The cultivation of genetically modified crops has long been a contentious issue in the European Union. Now a group of biotech specialists and legal experts propose a mechanism to take the political edge out of the authorization process.

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The European Union (EU) has for many years suffered from a dysfunctional voting procedure when it comes to the authorization of genetically modified (GM) crops to be commercially cultivated in EU countries. Several countries regularly demonstrate a voting behavior that seems politically rather than scientifically motivated.

To overcome the problems of this procedure, several experts are urging the European Commission to develop legislation that will allow EU countries to individually authorize the cultivation of GM crop varieties that have passed EU risk assessment. This would allow countries to adopt specific crop traits according to their needs. It would also take the pressure off the Commission, which would no longer be forced to take (or *not* take) decisions against the will of several EU countries.

Two years ago, a new legislation gave individual EU countries the right to prohibit the cultivation of GM crops despite EU-level authorization. This effectively moved away from the harmonization objective of the GMO Directive in a direction whereby national capitals are put more at the helm. For consistency, countries should also have the corresponding right to authorize the cultivation of GM crops.

– The risk assessment procedure should remain collective as it is today, under the auspices of the European Food Safety Authority, says Dennis Eriksson, lead author of the proposal.

– This enables more comprehensive and consistent assessments with larger resources and highly qualified, independent experts. Our proposal would also provide a more predictable situation for both farmers and the market, enabling countries that so desire to allow the application of crop traits that will for example reduce pesticide use, provide gluten-free cereals, improve the nutritional and health-promoting qualities of our food, and much more.

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