

January 2009

Update of paragraph 10.7

EU EXECUTIVE BACKS PROPOSALS FOR GM CROP CULTIVATION

It was reported in January 2009 that the European Union's executive had supported proposals to allow two types of GM maize to be grown in Europe, which were to be submitted to a vote by national EU biotechnology experts in February 2009. The crops concerned are Bt-11 maize, produced by the Swiss agrochemicals company Syngenta, and 1507 maize, which was jointly developed by Pioneer Hi-Bred International (a unit of the DuPont Co) and the Dow AgroSciences unit Mycogen Seeds.

The proposals, submitted by the European Commission's environment unit, would grant a standard 10-year licence for the two maize varieties -- and also be the EU's first authorizations for GM crop cultivation since 1998. Over recent years, there have been intense internal debates on GM policy within the EU, which have been exacerbated by the pressure of a court case brought by one of the manufacturing companies and by a third 'green light' report from the EU food safety agency EFSA. The proposal might thus be seen as an attempt to move beyond earlier disagreements.

However, in order to achieve approval for the growing of GM crops, the expert committee would have to reach a consensus deal under the EU's weighted country voting system - and it needs to be acknowledged that this may be unlikely, because the bloc's 27 member states have in the past hardly ever agreed on biotechnology issues

Website reference:

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/behindTheScenes/idUKTRE50K4E920090121>