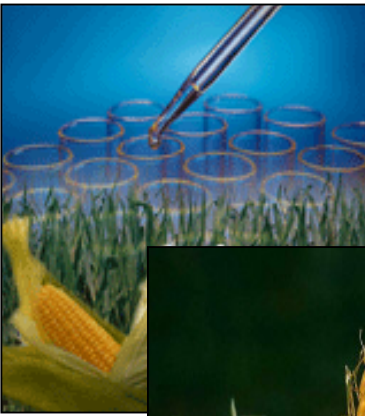


EP Intergroup on Sustainable Development

Coexistence of GMO's with conventional and organic farming



Genetic modification is one of the more controversial technologies of our time. In connection with agriculture, it has opponents who see it as an engine for the destruction of nature and a danger to human health. This resistance is based on fears the impact of GM crops have on the environment and on biodiversity and that GM, conventional and organic crops cannot successfully co-exist without causing significant economic harm to conventional and organic growers. In response to such fears, many regions have declared themselves 'GM-free' zones. Certain Member States have also taken further action and imposed bans on certain GM products in an attempt to prevent their cultivation.

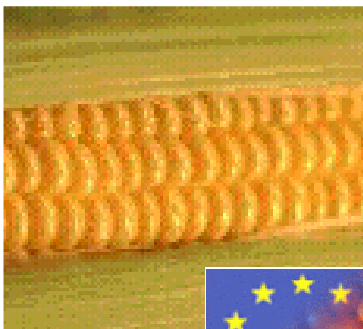
At the same time, it has friends who see it as a valuable innovation that is likely to deliver farm level benefits (yield gains, cost savings) and provide wider environmental gains (reduced pesticide use, switches to more environmentally benign herbicides, reduced levels of greenhouse gas emissions. Some even see it as a new weapon against starvation in areas of the world with dwindling land and water resources and strong population growth.

Once a GM crop has been authorised for cultivation in the EU, in principle farmers have the right to grow it if they wish, everyone should be free to choose. But that choice is eroded if GM and non-GM crops are unintentionally mixed up; and in such cases, there may be an economic impact on one or more of the parties involved.

Farmers should have a sustainable possibility to choose between conventional, organic and GMO production and consumers must have confidence in the quality and purity of the products that ends up on their plates, notably in what concerns organic products, where consumers' trust plays a leading role. Organic farmers are particularly concerned to guarantee the purity and good reputation of their products.

In 2008, the Commission will report on the progress made, including an update on the development and implementation of national co-existence measures.

The following and other questions will be addressed:



- How can farmers reduce the economic consequences of accidental presence of GM material in non-GM harvests?
- Is it economically and scientifically possible to guarantee 0% contamination?
- Is co-existence possible if cultivation of GM crops increases, namely for biofuels purposes?
- How to implement co-existence and how can we best guarantee freedom of choice?
- Is the current subsidiarity-based approach on coexistence where rules are devised by Member States the right way forward or will common principles or even EU-wide legislation be necessary in the future?
- How can we best minimise potential cross border problems related to coexistence in terms of liability and compensation?
- Should civil liability only tackle economic damages or include also environmental damages?