

## **Malta declaration: IFOAM EU Group calls for a moratorium on the cultivation of GMO**

*Representatives of the organic food sector from 27 member states call on the European Commission to ensure the maintenance of GMO free farming*

**Malta, 22/03/2010** – The IFOAM EU Group<sup>(1)</sup> held its board meeting on 18 and 19 March in Malta, the home country of the European Commissioner for Health and Consumer affairs, John Dalli, who is in charge of ruling on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) in Europe. The board meeting was organised on the island of Gozo to coincide with the Malta Organic Agriculture Movement conference: *Organic agriculture and Eco-Gozo*<sup>(2)</sup> held in collaboration with the ministry of Gozo. Organic farming can play an important role in sustainable development, a key priority for the achieving of a sustainable island *Eco-Gozo*<sup>(3)</sup>.

The IFOAM EU Group calls on Commissioner Dalli to commit himself to a GMO moratorium. This will protect the natural and cultural heritage of Malta, the potential for Eco-Gozo and will serve the best interests of all EU member states.

This will help to guarantee the freedom of choice for European consumers and farmers and protect biodiversity. This is also an economic necessity for the food sector<sup>(4)</sup>: Organic farmers as well as conventional farmers need to be sure that their products are protected from GMO contamination in order to be able to sell their products on the market.

The IFOAM EU Group calls on Commissioner Dalli to initiate the following:

1. The implementation of a **European wide moratorium** on GMO approvals and cultivation of GMOs in the EU. This moratorium must not end before the Commission has met the demands of the Environmental Council of 4 December 2008<sup>(5)</sup>:
  - To appraise the **socio-economic impacts** of placing on the market and the cultivation of GMOs: The impacts of GMOs in the whole food production chain have to be considered, taking into account the different regional structures of the farming and food system throughout Europe. This must include the costs for the prevention of contamination and mitigation measures in case of contamination in: seed production, on the field; cleaning of commonly used machinery, transport and storage facilities; as well as in keeping feed and food free from GMOs during processing.
  - To assess **long-term effects** of GM plants on the environment, especially on non-target organisms.
  - To set a framework for the consideration of the **characteristics of ecosystems/environments** and of the specific geographical areas where GMO might be grown in approval procedures.
  - To study the potential consequences for the environment of changes in the use of **herbicides** caused by herbicide-tolerant GM plants.
  - To ensure coherence between risk assessments of **GM plants that produce active substances** (pesticides) covered by directive 91/414/EEC and those of the corresponding plant protection products
2. The revision of the EU legislation related to GMO that is currently under way must result in an improved legislation, **protecting the interest and**

**economic existence of farmers and consumers that want to stay GMO free.**

3. Being the authority in charge of risk management, the EU Commission must base its decisions on the **precautionary principle** that is a basic principle in EU environmental legislation<sup>(6)</sup>.
4. The **EFSA** as the risk management authority must be reformed. Independence of EFSA scientists, transparency of risk assessment procedures as well as the acknowledgement of uncertainties and differing scientific opinions within these procedures must be guaranteed.
5. A European wide framework for co-existence must be established that ensures freedom of GMOs for all farmers as well as other food and feed operators that want to stay free of GMOs. Within this framework, the **polluter-pays-principle** must be implemented. Those companies who profit from GMOs have to be fully liable for any environmental and economic damage caused by the GMO crops. This includes costs for the prevention of GMO contamination as well as analysis costs for testing GMO free commodities.
6. A labelling threshold for the adventitious presence of genetically engineered organisms in **conventional and organic** seed has to be set at the limit of detection, as demanded by the European Parliament in its declaration from 18 December 2003<sup>(7)</sup>. As the seed is the beginning of the food chain, clean seed is essential for maintaining GMO free food and feed production.
7. Finally, the Commission should revise the approval of the **GMO starch potato** Amflora which includes an antibiotic resistance gene. EU legislation<sup>(8)</sup> requires by the end of 2004 the phasing out of all antibiotic resistance marker genes (ARMG), which may have adverse effects on human health and the environment.

The IFOAM EU Group is aware that the EU Commission is currently discussing the possibility of a legal framework that facilitates **national solutions** regarding the cultivation of certain GMOs. The IFOAM EU Group defends the right of regions and Member states to stay GMO free, but at the same time we must not forget that we have a common market in the EU. National solutions must **not** lead to a situation where extra costs for precautionary measures to maintain freedom of choice are induced.

The risk assessment and management must stay at European level, approval procedures must be made transparent and be underpinned by strict rules. Decisions must be based on the precautionary principle. Organic and conventional farmers that want to produce GMO free products must be protected in their right to stay GMO free if they are to remain financially viable throughout the EU and not only in those member states that decide to ban the cultivation of GMO at the national level.

More information:

IFOAM EU Group, phone + 32-2-280 12 23, Fax: +32-2-735 73 81,  
[info@ifoam-eu.org](mailto:info@ifoam-eu.org), [www.ifoam-eu.org](http://www.ifoam-eu.org)

## NOTES:

(1) The **IFOAM EU Group** represents more than 300 member organisations of IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) in the EU-27, the EU accession countries and EFTA. Member organisations include: consumer, farmer and processor associations; research, education and advisory organisations; certification bodies and commercial organic companies.

(2) [International Conference: Organic Agriculture and Eco-Gozo](#), 17 March 2010

(3) Gozo is on the way to become an eco-island by 2020, supported by a committed sustainable community: [www.eco-gozo.com](http://www.eco-gozo.com)

(4) Costs for food processors to keep their products free from GMOs are rising with each GMO that is on the market; costs to prevent GMO contamination arise for GMO free seed; isolation distances between fields to avoid pollination; cleaning of shared sowing, harvesting, transport, storage and milling facilities; segregation of processing and packaging; withdrawals cost millions. See also – [www.boelw.de/uploads/media/BOELW\\_Schadensbericht\\_Gentechnik090318.pdf](http://www.boelw.de/uploads/media/BOELW_Schadensbericht_Gentechnik090318.pdf)

(5) Council Conclusions on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), 2912<sup>nd</sup> Environment Council meeting, Brussels, 4 December 2008 - [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/envir/104509.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/envir/104509.pdf)

(6) Treaty on the functioning of the European Union, Article 191 (2): *Union policy on the environment shall aim at a high level of protection taking into account the diversity of situations in the various regions of the Union. It shall be based on the precautionary principle and on the principles that preventive action should be taken, that environmental damage should as a priority be rectified at source and that the polluter should pay.* <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/st06655-re01.en08.pdf>

(7) European Parliament resolution on coexistence between genetically modified crops and conventional and organic crops (2003/2098(INI)), 18 December 2003 - <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P5-TA-2003-0600+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

(8) Directive 2001/18/EC on the deliberate release into the environment of Genetically Modified Organisms, Article 4(2) - <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2001:106:0001:0038:EN:PDF>