Gen-ethisches Netzwerk e.V.

Crash-Test for GM maize
Strengthen independent risk research!

(May 2008) In the EU, genetically modified (GM) crops are approved without a sufficient risk assessment. Monsantos genetically modified maize MON810 produces an insecticidal toxin, that is disseminated into the environment through plant material, pollen and roots. Affected are not only the pest insects, but also other organisms and their habitats, as a number of studies have shown. While Bt maize MON810 is currently the only genetically modified plant approved for commercial cultivation in the EU, it is banned from cultivation in six member states because of serious safety concerns. The latest country to ban MON810 was Romania in March 2008, following the example of France, Greece, Austria, Poland and Hungary. Similar safety concerns also prompted the EU Commission not to approve two other types of GM maize, and instead refer them back to EFSA, the EU authority that assesses GMO applications. These types were Syngentas "Bt11" and Pioneer Hi-Breds GM maize with the so called "1507" construct. Both had been modified to build - different - Bt toxins.

How much toxin is in genetically modified maize?

Even after 10 years of commercial growing, there are still fundamental knowledge gaps about Bt maize MON810. Amongst others there is no knowledge about the toxin concentrations produced by the plants. So far it is only known, that the toxin concentration can vary greatly – possibly depending on a number of factors. There is no comprehensive research about how great these variations are or what causes them. In any case, Monsanto has not published any detailed information on it. Variations in toxin concentrations can allow pest insects to develop resistance more quickly while increasing the risk for non-target organisms such as caterpillars of other butterflies or soil organisms.

Put the GM maize into the climate chamber!

One way to study the open questions further is to grow GM maize plants in a climate chamber. This way, factors like temperature, different soil, fertilizer, additional stress factors and their effect on the toxin concentration can be measured without endangering the environment. The Gen-ethical Network (GeN) wants to pioneer this in a concrete project by financing a study with GM maize in a climate chamber. Please support this project by signing the petition "Crash-test for GM maize - Strengthen independent research!" and by making a donation. The petition can be downloaded at

www.gen-ethisches-netzwerk.de.

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