

***Petition for a more independent risk research in the agro-biotechnology
Demands directed to EU Commission and EU governments***

Crash-Test for GM maize - Strengthen independent risk research!

Berlin and Bonn. Today the Gen-ethical Network (GeN) and several other organisations started a petition to demand that the European Governments and the EU Commission change their policy about the risk assessment of genetically modified (GM) agricultural crops.

One demand is that companies dealing with genetically modified seed should have to pay 10 % of their turnover into an independent fund from which a comprehensive risk research can be supported. The experience with EU approvals shows that there is little systematic and critical research. Most studies are conducted by the companies themselves, and the authorities accept these documents without in-depth investigation.

Among the initial signatories are Bioland, Bio Austria, BUND (Friends of the Earth), Campact e.V., foodwatch e.V., the GEKKO-Foundation, the Gesellschaft für ökologische Forschung e.V., the Naturschutzbund (NABU) e.V., tegut, Foundation on Future Farming (ZSL), and a lot of individual signatories.

“The discussion about the genetically modified maize MON810 shows, that its risks have not really been sufficiently assessed. To change that, the conditions for risk assessment have to be changed fundamentally”, said Christof Potthof of the Gen-ethical Network who is in Bonn to accompany the action. “There are good reasons that MON810 is forbidden in six European Countries such as France, Greece, Austria, Poland, Romania and Hungary.”

The genetically modified maize MON810 of the company Monsanto produces an insecticidal toxin that is disseminated into the environment through plant material, pollen and roots. Effected are not only the pest insects but also other organisms and their habitats, as several studies have shown. It is known that the toxin concentration – dependent on different factors – can vary greatly. There are no comprehensive studies how great these variations are or what causes them. At any rate, no detailed information has been published yet. Variations in toxin concentrations can allow pest insects to develop resistance quickly while increasing the risk for non-target organisms such as caterpillars of other butterflies or soil organisms.

The petition is launched together with the project “Climate chamber for GM maize” at the *Diversity Festival* on Whit Monday, 12 May, at the Rheinauen in Bonn. The Diversity Festival is the opening of the *Planet Diversity*, the international conference about the future of food and agriculture – local, diverse and gmo-free.

To point out the gaps in the current risk research, the initiators of the petition have put up a climate chamber in Bonn. Here factors like climate and weather, different soils, fertilizer, additional stress factors and their effects on the toxin concentrations can be measured. The Gen-ethic Network wants to make sure that such a test with GM maize can be undertaken in 2009. To ensure that the politics become active on this topic, the GeN collects signatures for this petition.

Additional information:

Petition “Crash-Test for GM maize - Strengthen independent risk research!” and background material on genetically modified maize and climate chamber at:

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