EU vote means UK Government must protect our right to grow and eat GM free

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With the European Parliament expected to open the door to more GM crop approvals by voting tomorrow to allow national GM crop bans[1], campaign group GM Freeze says the UK Government must protect people's right to grow and eat GM-free.

GM Freeze has previously expressed concern about the legal basis for national bans, about the role of GM companies in negotiations and about the restrictions placed on reasons that national Governments can cite in imposing a ban [2]. However, their greatest fears remain focused on the contamination of non-GM crops [3].

"Contamination incidents all over the world show that seed and pollen will spread wherever the wind, wildlife and human error take them, right along the supply chain." says GM Freeze Director Liz O'Neal.

"This directive offers no meaningful protection to people who want to make informed choices about what they are eating or to farmers who want to protect their fields from the superweeds and biodiversity loss associated with the kind of GM crops likely to be heading our way. There are no EU-wide mandatory measures to prevent contamination within an individual member state and no rules governing liability. That means it's down to the UK Government to protect our right to grow and eat GM Free."

A recent letter from Defra minister Lord de Mauley to campaign group Beyond GM [4] promised "pragmatic rules… to segregate GM and non-GM production" but failed to mention whether or not such rules would address the concerns of over 11,000 members of the public who responded to the department's 2006 proposals on the subject [5]. This will only serve to raise fears amongst campaigners concerned about the environmental, social and ethical impacts of GM crops and, indeed, anyone who values choice.

Ends

Notes to editors

[1] It is expected that the option of imposing a national ban will break the stalemate between pro- and anti- GM nations within the EU, allowing GM crop applications to be approved more quickly.

[2] http://www.gmfreeze.org/news-releases/253/and http://www.gmfreeze.org/news-releases/255/

[3] http://www.gmfreeze.org/news-releases/254/

[4] http://beyond-gm.org/uk-government-preparing-the-ground-for-gm-crops/

[5]

GM Freeze is the UK's umbrella campaign for those concerned about the impacts of genetic modification in food and farming. Members include Friends of the Earth, the Soil Association, development charities, organic and conventional farmers, scientists, campaigners, retailers and concerned individuals.

For further information, quotes or interviews, please contact Liz O'Neill direct on liz@gmfreeze.org or 0845 217 8992.

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