

Parliament objects to herbicide-resistant GM carnation and maize authorisations

Plenary sessions [08-06-2016 - 13:58]

The EU Commission should withdraw its authorisations for the use of herbicide-resistant GM carnations and maize, say two non-binding resolutions voted on Wednesday. Authorising GM carnations would encourage the worldwide use of a diabetes medicine as a herbicide, while the GM maize is resistant to glyphosate, which is classified as “probably carcinogenic” by the World Health Organisation (WHO), MEPs say.

MEPs objected, by 430 votes to 188, with 33 abstentions, to a European Commission implementing decision in which it proposed to authorise the import, distribution and retailing in the EU of cut flowers of the genetically modified (GM) carnation SHD-27531-4, which is resistant to sulfonylurea herbicide, for ornamental use.

MEPs point out that sulfonylureas, which are a common second line option for managing type 2 diabetes, are also used as herbicides, as they are highly toxic to plants at very low doses. So “creating a market for sulfonylurea resistant plants will encourage the worldwide use of this medicine against diabetes as a herbicide”, possibly entailing “worldwide detrimental effects on biodiversity and chemical contamination of drinking water”, they say.

Moreover, MEPs say that although “the European Food Safety Authority GMO Panel is aware of a food habit in certain populations to intentionally consume carnation petals as garnish”, it did not assess the possible consequences of the intentional consumption of GM carnations by humans.

MEPs also objected, by 426 votes to 202 with 33 abstentions, to a separate proposal to authorize the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of, or produced from genetically modified maize Bt11 × MIR162 × MIR604 × GA21, and genetically modified maizes combining two or three of the events Bt11, MIR162, MIR604 and GA21. They point out that while some of those GM events confer tolerance to certain pests, MON-ØØØ21-9 maize is resistant to glyphosate herbicide, which is classified as “probably carcinogenic” to humans by the WHO’s specialised cancer agency.

Flawed process

MEPs also point out that since the current GM authorisation process came into force, every GM authorisation decision has been taken by the Commission without the support of a qualified majority of EU member states. In effect, this turns what should be the exception into the norm.

Background

A separate draft EU law that would enable any EU member state to restrict or prohibit the sale and use of EU-approved GMO food or feed on its territory was rejected by Parliament in October 2015. MEPs are concerned that this law might prove unworkable or that it could lead to the reintroduction of border checks between pro- and anti-GMO countries. They called on the Commission to table a new proposal.

Procedure: non-legislative resolution

Press release

Further information

- Adopted texts 2016/2683(RSP) and 2016/2682(RSP) will soon be available here (08.06.2016):
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>
- Video recording of debate (click on 25.05.2016)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/search-by-date>
- Audiovisual material for media

: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/default.aspx>
- Press release on committee vote (24.05.2016)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20160524IPR28884/Environment-MEPs-object-to-GM-carnation-and-maize-authorisations>
- EP research: Imports of GM food and feed: Right of Member States to opt out
: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/569030/EPRS_BRI\(2015\)569030_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/569030/EPRS_BRI(2015)569030_EN.pdf)

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