

Reactions against the GM potato from Romania

The GMO Information Centre & the Ecological Club Transylvania

3 March, 2010. Yesterday, the European Commission authorized for commercial growing a genetically modified potato, which contains an antibiotic resistant marker gene. The pulic was let down by EU's new Consumer Chief through this unprecedented decision. The EU hasn't authorized for cultivation, any new GMO in the last 12 years.

The GM potato Amflora (EH92-527-1), was set up by the German chemical company BASF, in order to produce more starch in the form of Amylopectin which can be industrially processed to manufacture textiles, paper and concrete. Yesterday, Amflora received all permits required by BASF: commercial cultivation for industrial use and starch by-products as feed. This is the first decision to approve a new GMO in Europe since 1998, the date of authorization of the MON810 maize.

According to the file submitted by BASF, the main beneficiary of the genetically modified potato starch product is the paper industry.

Risks. The genetically modified potato line EH92-527-1 which contains a genetic modification that harbours an nptII gene as a selectable marker. This gene codes for neomycin phosphotransferase, an enzyme that generally confers resistance to several antibiotics, the most relevant ones being kanamycin, neomycin, paromycin, butirosin, gentamicin B and geneticin.¹ It cannot be guaranteed that the antibiotics resistant gene will not enter in the food chain.

The authorization procedure² started in 2003 in Sweden and it was surrounded by pressures, threats and court cases opened by BASF and it's partners against the European institutions,³ as well as publicity campaigns for the Amflora potato and open letters to Stavros Dimas, the former Environmental Commissioner⁴.

There are alternatives to the GM potato, as Emsland Group from Germany states. They created a conventioan potato which contains starch as much as Amflora, but poses no risks.⁵

„This decision shows a complete lack of responsibility from the European Commission to authorize for commercial growing a dangerous potato, assuming that it will not reach the food channel just because they authorized it on paper only "for industrial purposes". On the shelves of stores, consumers will not make a difference, between an edible potato and an industrial potato.” declares Dan Craioveanu, vice president of the Ecological Club Transylvania.

"We will monitor the actions of Romanian authorities, to ensure that environmental and consumer safety is a priority. Although it is well known that BASF is massively funding the Romanian research sector, and is in good relations with the Romanian national authorities, we are firmly requesting the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment to not commit again the same mistake as in January 2010, when they allowed the cancerigen fungicide based on Initium made by BASF and this time they will act responsibly." added Ramona Duminicioiu, president of Information Center on Genetically Modified

1 <http://www.emea.europa.eu/pdfs/human/opiniongen/5693707en.pdf>

2 The authorization process: <http://infomg.ro/web/en/Home/News/3/715>

3 <http://www.infomg.org/spip.php?article3640>

4 <http://www.infomg.org/spip.php?article3440>

5 The Amflora potato is not necessary. Press release Emsland Group 25/09/2010

<http://web47.freisign.your-host.de/content.php?>

[item=635&action=details&id=28&page=1&&NXTSTPID2=cc541efcd66f3a856496f512ba0a05e3&NXTSTPID2=1ec42f8e250fa4d87af028dcaac64aea&NXTSTPID2=5184c9d58805bbcf31530f114c44e27d](http://web47.freisign.your-host.de/content.php?item=635&action=details&id=28&page=1&&NXTSTPID2=cc541efcd66f3a856496f512ba0a05e3&NXTSTPID2=1ec42f8e250fa4d87af028dcaac64aea&NXTSTPID2=5184c9d58805bbcf31530f114c44e27d)

Organisms.

For more informations, please contact:

Ramona Duminicioiu – president of the GMO Information Centre

David Francisc St., no. 10/5
400102 – Cluj Napoca, România

Phone/Fax: 0264 599 204

Mobile: 0746 337 022

E-mail: contact@infomg.ro

Web: www.infomg.ro

Dan Craioveanu – vicepresident Clubul Ecologic Transilvania

Mobil: 0722 365181

E-mail: office@cetcluj.ro