Resolution on the draft Commission implementing decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified soybean SYHT0H2 (SYN-ØØØH2-5), pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council

2020/2838(RSP) - 11/11/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 476 votes to 178, with 25 abstentions, a resolution objecting to the draft Commission implementing decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing genetically modified soybean SYHT0H2 (SYN-ØØØH2-5).

The application for marketing authorisation was submitted to the German competent authority on 8 August 2012 by Syngenta Crop Protection NV/SA. On 20 January 2020, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) adopted a favourable opinion on the application.

Main comments from Member States

Members pointed out that Member States have submitted critical comments to EFSA highlighting in particular:

- the lack of analysis of herbicide residues on imports of genetically modified SYHT0H2 soybean and the possible health risks for consumers, the lack of toxicological information and, therefore, the impossibility of assessing the potential risk associated with the consumption of foodstuffs produced from genetically modified SYHT0H2 soybean;

- the fact that the information necessary to draw the conclusions of the environmental health risk assessment is not complete and the need to provide a detailed monitoring plan before an authorisation can be granted.

Compliance with EU international obligations

Members recalled that Regulation (EU) No 1829/2003 obliges the Commission, when preparing its decisions, to take into account legitimate factors including the Union's obligations under the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Parliament also reiterated its concern that the EU's high dependence on imports of animal feed in the form of soybeans is causing deforestation abroad.

In view of the urgent need to combat deforestation in the Amazon, Cerrado and Gran Chaco forests, Members called on the Commission to immediately suspend imports of GM soya grown in Brazil and Argentina until legally binding and effective mechanisms are put in place to prevent the placing on the EU market of products linked to deforestation and associated human rights violations.

Undemocratic decision-making

Members recalled that in the vote held on 15 September 2020, the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health delivered no opinion, meaning that the authorisation was not supported by a qualified majority of Member States.

The Commission has repeatedly deplored the fact that decisions on the authorisation of GMOs continue to be adopted by the Commission without a qualified majority of Member States being in favour, which is very much the exception for product authorisations as a whole, but has become the norm for decisions on GM food and feed authorisations.

Recommendations

Based on these considerations, Parliament considered that the draft Commission implementing decision was not compatible with EU law. Consequently, it called on the Commission to:

- withdraw its draft implementing decision;

- make progress on the development of sustainability criteria, with full involvement of the Parliament;

- take into account the EU's obligations under international agreements, such as the Paris Climate Agreement, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN sustainable development goals;

- not to authorise herbicide-tolerant GM crops until the health risks from residues have been thoroughly investigated on a case-by-case basis;

- take into account the risk assessment of the use of complementary herbicides and their residues in the risk assessment of herbicide-tolerant GM crops, whether the plant concerned is intended to be grown in the EU or imported into the EU as food or feed;

- not to authorise the import of genetically modified plants intended for food or feed use which have been rendered tolerant to an active substance with a weed-killing effect not authorised in the EU.

Parliament reiterated its call for a European vegetable protein production and supply strategy, which would enable the Union to become less dependent on GM soybean imports and to create shorter food chains and regional markets.