Resolution on the draft Commission implementing decision renewing the authorisation for the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified maize MIR604 (SYN-IR6Ø4-5) pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829 /2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council

2020/2893(RSP) - 17/12/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 489 votes to 185, with 22 abstentions, a resolution objecting to the draft Commission implementing decision renewing the authorisation for the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified maize MIR604 (SYN-IR6Ø4-5) pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

The application for renewal of the marketing authorisation was submitted to the Commission on July 26, 2018 by Syngenta Crop Protection NV/SA, on behalf of Syngenta Crop Protection AG. On 25 September 2019, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) adopted a favourable opinion on the application.

Main concerns from Member States

Members pointed out that Member States have submitted many critical comments to the EFSA, including that:

- the monitoring method adopted by the applicant does not fully comply with the requirements of Annex VII of Directive 2001/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and the recommendations of EFSA;

- the claim that GM maize MIR604 is as safe as conventional maize has not been substantiated;

- the proposed general surveillance of anticipated adverse effects is not sufficiently elaborated;

- the EU has ratified the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, which makes it clear that both exporting and importing countries have international responsibilities regarding biological diversity.

Members also noted that:

- doubts remain about the validity of safety studies to assess acute toxicity and degradation in digestive fluids with mCry3A and PMI proteins produced in a recombinant E. coli strain were used;

- side effects have been observed that may affect the immune system following exposure to Bt toxins and that some Bt toxins may have adjuvant properties, meaning that they can increase the allergenicity of other proteins with which they come into contact;

- the use of Bt GM crops leads to continuous exposure of the target and non-target organisms to Bt toxins.

Undemocratic decision-making

Members recalled that the vote in October 2020 of 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 recognised that the fact that GMO authorisation decisions continue to be adopted by the Commission without a qualified majority of Member States in favour, which is very much the exception for product authorisations as a whole but which has become the norm for decision-making on GM food and feed authorisations, is problematic.

Recommendations

On the basis of these considerations, Parliament considered that the Commission's implementing decision is not consistent EU law. Consequently, it called on the Commission to:

- withdraw its draft implementing decision;

- move forward with the utmost urgency concerning the development of sustainability criteria, with full involvement of 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;

- stop authorising GMOs, whether for cultivation or for food and feed uses, when no opinion is delivered by Member States in the Appeal Committee.

The EFSA is called on to:

- widen its risk assessment in order to fully take into account all interactions and combinatorial effects between Bt-toxins, GM plants and their constituents, residues from spraying with the complementary herbicides, the environment as well as impacts on health and food safety;

- no longer accept toxicity studies based on isolated proteins which are likely to be different in structure and biological effects compared to those produced by the plant itself, and to require that all tests are carried out with tissue from the GM plant;

- request data on the impact of the consumption of food and feed derived from GM plants on the intestinal microbiome.