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 cotton GHB614 (BCS-GHØØ2-5) pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829 /2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council

2021/3006(RSP) - 15/02/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 477 votes to 207, with 15 abstentions, a 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 cotton GHB614 (BCS-GHØØ2-5) pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

On 22 April 2020, BASF SE, based in Germany, on behalf of BASF Agricultural Solutions Seeds US LLC, based in the United States submitted to the Commission an application for the renewal of that authorisation for the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified cotton GHB614.

On 28 May 2021, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) adopted a favourable opinion on this renewal application.

Lack of assessment of the complementary herbicide

Members pointed out that several studies have shown that genetically modified herbicide-tolerant crops lead to an increase in the use of ‘complementary’. GM cotton may therefore be exposed more frequently to higher doses of glyphosate, which could lead to an increase in the amount of residues in the harvest.

A number of recent scientific peer-reviewed studies confirm the carcinogenic potential of glyphosate.

Furthermore, the assessment of residues of herbicides and their breakdown products found on GM plants is considered to be outside the remit of the EFSA GMO Panel. It is therefore not undertaken a part of the GMO authorisation process.

Comments from Member States' competent authorities

Members recalled thatMember States have submitted numerous critical comments to EFSA, including that:

- in the absence of any real surveillance system making it possible to specifically trace the consumption of GMOs or their by-products by humans or by animals, it is not possible to draw any pertinent lessons on the safety of consuming GMOs from the ten-year period;

- the monitoring reports (2011 to 2019) have many deficiencies and are neither in line with Directive 2001 /18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and the corresponding guidelines nor with 2011 EFSA guidance on the post-market environmental monitoring of genetically modified plants;

- the presented literature analysis submitted by the applicant was incomplete and that spraying the GM cotton with higher concentrations of glyphosate is likely to result in more herbicide residues and metabolites on the crops.

Undemocratic decision-making

Members noted that no opinion was given in the December 2021 vote in the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health, meaning that the authorisation was not supported by a qualified majority of Member States.

The Commission recognised that it is problematic that decisions on the authorisation of GMOs continue to be adopted by the Commission without a qualified majority of Member States in favour, which is largely the exception for product authorisations as a whole, but has become the norm for decision-making on authorisations of GM food and GM feed.

Recommendations

On the basis of these considerations, Parliament considered that the Commission's implementing decision was not consistent with Union law and called for it to be withdrawn.

The Commission is also called upon to:

- not to authorise herbicide-tolerant GM crops until the health risks related to residues have been thoroughly investigated on a case-by-case basis, which requires a full residue assessment of the spraying of these GM crops with complementary herbicides, an assessment of herbicide breakdown products and any combinatorial effects, including with the GM plant itself;

- take into account the Union’s obligations under international agreements, such as the Paris Climate Agreement, the UN CBD and the UN SDGs and ensure that the draft implementing acts explain how they uphold the principle of ‘do no harm’;

- not to authorise the import for food or feed purposes of any genetically modified plant that has been rendered tolerant to a herbicide active substance not authorised for use in the EU.

Parliament expressed its disappointment that the Commission has since continued to authorise GMOs for import into the Union, despite ongoing objections by Parliament and a majority of Member States voting against.