Resolution on the draft Commission implementing decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified soybean MON 87769 × MON 89788 pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council

2022/2566(RSP) - 06/04/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 420 votes to 189, with 16 abstentions, a resolution objecting to the draft Commission implementing decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified soybean MON 87769 × MON 89788 pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

On 27 July 2010, Monsanto Europe S.A./N.V., based in Belgium, submitted, on behalf of Monsanto Company, an application for the placing on the market of foods, food ingredients and feed containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified soybean MON 87769 × MON 89788 (the ‘GM soybean’).

EFSA was not able to reach a conclusion on the safety of the GM soybean because of the lack of data on dietary exposure to refined, bleached, deodorised oil produced from the GM soybean, leading to an incomplete nutritional assessment. It concluded that the GM soybean is unlikely to have adverse effects on the environment in the context of the application.

Lack of assessment of the complementary herbicide

Members pointed out that the cultivation of herbicide-tolerant GM crops has been shown to lead to increased herbicide use, in particular due to the development of herbicide-tolerant weeds. GM soybeans may therefore be exposed to repeated doses of glyphosate herbicides, which may result in higher residues at harvest.

EFSA concluded in November 2015 that glyphosate was unlikely to be carcinogenic, while the International Agency for Research on Cancer has instead classified glyphosate as a probable carcinogen for humans.

Parliament also raised the problem that the assessment of herbicide residues and metabolites found in GM plants is considered to be outside the remit of EFSA's GMO Panel, and is therefore not carried out as part of the GMO authorisation process.

Member State competent authority comments

The Member States provided EFSA with numerous critical comments, including that the risk assessment of the GM herbicide-tolerant plants for food and feed does not comply with EFSA's basic trial design requirements, that the monitoring plan does not relate the monitoring activities to the relevant protection

goals, and that the compositional analysis does not include residues of the complementary herbicide or its metabolites.

Upholding the Union's international obligations

According to a 2017 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, hazardous pesticides have catastrophic health impacts, especially in developing countries. Members believe that authorising the import of GM soyabean would increase the demand for this glyphosate-treated crop, which would increase the exposure of workers and the environment in third countries.

Furthermore, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 aims to halt deforestation, a major cause of biodiversity decline, by 2020. Soya production is a major driver of deforestation in the Amazon, Cerrado and Gran Chaco forests in South America, with 97 % and 100 % of soya cultivated respectively in Brazil and Argentina is GM soya. The vast majority of GM soybeans authorised for cultivation in Brazil and Argentina are also authorised for import into the Union.

Undemocratic decision-making

Parliament stressed that the Commission recognises 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 has become the norm for decision-making on GM food and feed authorisations, is problematic.

Despite its own acknowledgement of democratic shortcomings, the lack of support from Member States and the objections of Parliament, the Commission continues to authorise GMOs.

Recommendations

On the basis of these considerations, Parliament considered that the Commission's draft implementing decision is not consistent with EU law and asked the Commission to withdraw its draft implementing decision.

The Commission was called on:

- not to authorise the import of herbicide-tolerant GM crops;

- immediately suspend the import of GM soyabeans cultivated in Brazil and Argentina until effective and legally binding mechanisms have been put place to prevent the placing on the EU market of products associated with deforestation and related human rights abuses;

- take into account the EU's obligations under international agreements, such as the Paris Climate Agreement, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the SDGs.

Parliament also pointed out that the amendments to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 182/2011, adopted by Parliament on 17 December 2020 as a basis for negotiations with the Council, prohibit the Commission from authorising GMOs in the absence of a qualified majority of Member States in favour. It insisted that the Commission respect this position.