Resolution on the draft Commission implementing decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified maize Bt11 × MIR162 × MIR604 × MON 89034 × 5307 × GA21 and thirty sub-combinations, pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council

2023/2993(RSP) - 14/12/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 380 votes to 156, 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 maize Bt11 × MIR162 × MIR604 × MON 89034 × 5307 × GA21 and thirty sub-combinations, pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

On 13 April 2018, Syngenta Crop Protection NV/SA, based in Belgium, submitted, on behalf of Syngenta Crop Protection AG, based in Switzerland, an application to the competent authority of Germany for the placing on the market of foods, food ingredients and feed containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified maize Bt11 × MIR162 × MIR604 × MON 89034 × 5307 × GA21. The application also concerned the placing on the market of products containing or consisting of genetically modified maize Bt11 × MIR162 × MIR604 × MON 89034 × 5307 × GA21 (the ‘stacked GM maize’) for uses other than food and feed, with the exception of cultivation.

On 5 June 2023, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) adopted a favourable opinion on this application.

Lack of assessment of the complementary herbicide

Members pointed out that the vast majority of GM crops have been genetically modified so that they are tolerant to one or more ‘complementary’ herbicides which can be used throughout the cultivation of the GM crop, without the crop dying, as would be the case for a non-herbicide tolerant crop. A number of studies show that herbicide-tolerant GM crops result in a higher use of complementary herbicides, in large part because of the emergence of herbicide-tolerant weeds.

Heightened reliance on complementary herbicides on farms planting the GM crops accelerate the emergence and spread of weeds resistant to those herbicides, thereby triggering the need for even more herbicide use, a vicious circle known as ‘the herbicide treadmill’.

The adverse impacts stemming from excessive reliance on herbicides will worsen on soil health, water quality, and above and below ground biodiversity, as well as leading to increased human and animal exposure, potentially also via increased herbicide residues on food and feed.

The resolution stated that the EFSA concluded in November 2015 that glyphosate was unlikely to be carcinogenic and the European Chemicals Agency concluded in March 2017 that no classification was warranted. On the contrary, in 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the specialised cancer agency of the World Health Organization, classified glyphosate as a probable carcinogen for humans. A number of recent scientific peer-reviewed studies confirm the carcinogenic potential of glyphosate.

Outstanding questions concerning Bt toxins

A number of studies show that 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.

Undemocratic decision-making

In its ninth term, Parliament has already adopted 36 objections to placing GMOs on the market. Despite its own acknowledgement of the democratic shortcomings, the lack of support from Member States and the objections of Parliament, the Commission continues to authorise GMOs.

Recommendations

Based on these considerations, Parliament considered that the Commission's draft implementing decision was not consistent with Union law and asked the Commission to withdraw its draft implementing decision.

The Commission is also asked to:

- not authorise herbicide-tolerant GM crops, due to the associated increased use of complementary herbicides and therefore the increased risks to biodiversity, food safety and workers' health;

- take account of the EU's obligations under international agreements, such as the Paris Climate Agreement, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN's SDGs, and ensure that draft implementing acts explain how they uphold with the principle of 'do no harm'.