Objection pursuant to Rule 115(2) and (3): Genetically modified soybean MON 87705

2025/2647(RSP) - 08/05/2025 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 373 votes to 150, with 10 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 87705×MON 87708×MON 89788 pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

On 11 September 2015, Monsanto Europe S.A./N.V. on behalf of Monsanto Company, based in the United States, submitted to the national competent authority of the Netherlands an application for the placing on the market of foods, food ingredients and feed containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified soybean MON 87705×MON 87708×MON 89788 (the GM soybean), in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 (the application). The application also covered the placing on the market of products containing or consisting of the GM soybean for uses other than food and feed, with the exception of cultivation.

On 2 April 2020, EFSA adopted a favourable opinion on the GM soybean. On 3 October 2024, EFSA adopted a statement concluding that the GM soybean, as described in the application, is as **safe as its conventional counterpart** and the tested non-genetically modified soybean reference varieties with respect to its potential effects on human and animal health and the environment. EFSA also concluded that the consumption of the GM soybean does not represent a nutritional concern. The GM soybean has been modified to be tolerant to glyphosate-based and dicamba herbicides and to alter its fatty acid profile.

Lack of assessment of the complementary herbicide

Members pointed out that a number of studies show that herbicide-tolerant GM crops lead to an increased 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 accelerates 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 lead to the deterioration of soil health, water quality and above and below ground biodiversity, and will also lead to increased human and animal exposure, potentially also via increased herbicide residues in food and feed.

Questions concerning the carcinogenicity of glyphosate remain. 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 peer-reviewed scientific studies confirm the carcinogenic potential of glyphosate.

Assessment of herbicide residues and metabolites found on GM plants is considered outside the remit of the EFSA Panel on GMOs and is therefore not undertaken as part of the authorisation process for GMOs.

Undemocratic decision-making

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. The vote on 28 February 2025 of the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed delivered no opinion, meaning that the authorisation was not supported by a qualified majority of Member States.

Upholding international obligations

Members recalled the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 3.9, which aims to significantly reduce the number of deaths and illnesses caused by hazardous chemicals, pollution and contamination of air, water and soil by 2030.

In addition, the UN SDG 15 includes the goal of halting deforestation by 2020. Soybean production is a major driver of deforestation in the Amazon, the Cerrado and the Gran Chaco forests of South America.

Recommendations

In the light of these considerations, Parliament considered that the draft Commission implementing decision is not consistent with Union law, which aims to provide the basis for ensuring a high level of protection of human life and health, animal health and welfare, and environmental and consumer interests in relation to genetically modified food and feed, while ensuring the effective functioning of the internal market.

Accordingly, Parliament called on the Commission to:

- withdraw its draft implementing decision and submit a new draft to the committee;

- not to authorise herbicide-tolerant GM crops, as it would lead to increased use of complementary herbicides and therefore increased risks to biodiversity, food safety and workers' health;

- as matter of urgency, deliver on its commitment to come forward with a proposal to ensure that hazardous chemicals banned in the Union are not produced for export, and on its commitment to ensure reciprocity by better aligning our domestic production standards with those applied to imports, notably for pesticides;

- ensure convergence of standards between the Union and its partners in free trade agreement negotiations, in order to meet Union safety standards;

- 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 are accompanied by an explanatory memorandum explaining how they uphold the principle of 'do no harm'.