

Title:

The Seeds Industry in Europe Needs Clear Legal Rules

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404

Summary:

t the conference on co-existence, held from the 4th to 6th of April in Vienna, Jeremy Sweet, environmental consultant and Vice-President of the GMO panel of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) called for a clear regulation of the threshold values for permissible contamination of conventional seeds with GMOs.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

At the conference on co-existence, held from the 4th to 6th of April in Vienna, Jeremy Sweet, environmental consultant and Vice-President of the GMO panel of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) called for a clear regulation of the threshold values for permissible contamination of conventional seeds with GMOs. It is absolutely necessary to have the same threshold values EU-wide, which should be scientifically based. The lower the threshold values would be laid down the higher would be the costs for the European seeds producers. With low values of 0.1 to 0.3 % very extensive separation procedures or even special zones for the seed production would be required. This could result in higher costs for the farmers. This again would weaken internationally the terms of the competition of the EU-agricultural production.

Further, said Sweet, the question of necessary safety distances between fields with conventional and with GM-seeds has to be settled. Most of the studies, which have been conducted in Spain, Germany, France and Great Britain, came to the conclusion, that co-existence is quite possible, if suitable safety distances will be kept. Thereby the extent of the necessary distance would be dependent on the defined threshold value; also for the establishing of the suitable distance the plant type concerned, the time of bloom as well as different climatic and ecological conditions are playing important roles. This means, that in determining and applying co-existence measures it is necessary to take into account the local conditions. In the end the mentioned factors altogether are deciding about the possible GM-purity of the seeds. Also important would be measures for the cleaning of the used farm implements as well as measures for the separation of conventional and GM-seeds in the storage and

at the transportation, so that it will not come to a later contamination.

In order to reach an effective and acceptable co-existence, further sensible regulations for the labeling of GM-products as well as measures for the traceability and for a risk management are required. For that the existing methods for the proof of GMOs in products should be internationally standardized and the different legal systems of the individual EU-countries should be harmonized.

Jeremy Sweet gives a clear and concise description of the problems and the issues being up for decision within the EU.

Jeremy Sweet is a sociologist whose main areas of scientific research are bioethics and technology. To read more about Jeremy go to <http://www.lifesciencesblog.com>