

Hilary Benn - Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Defra
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

Object: Bt11 and 1507 Authorisations and National Bans

Dear Minister Hilary Benn,

Crucial decisions are pending at the European Union's level regarding the cultivation of genetically modified crops, which will have significant consequences for the future of our food, our health and the environment.

The European Commission had proposed to force Austria, Hungary, France and Greece to lift safeguard measures they put in effect against Monsanto maize MON 810, the only GM crop currently allowed for cultivation in the EU. Twenty-two EU countries rejected the latest attempt to force Hungary and Austria to lift their bans on GM crops. We are disappointed that you were one of only 4 countries who voted in favour of lifting the bans. We urge you to change your position and support the national bans in France and Greece at the next Council of ministers.

The European Commission also proposes to approve the cultivation of two GM maize crops (Syngenta Bt11 and Pioneer 1507). This would be the first approvals of the cultivation of a genetically modified crop in Europe since 1998.

Given that,

- Increasing scientific evidence demonstrates that GMOs pose unpredictable and unexpected consequences for our health and the environment;
- the two GM maize varieties that you will vote on are highly controversial. There are many scientific unknowns and uncertainties regarding their safety for the environment as well as human and animal health. They are genetically modified to produce a Bt-toxin which threatens also non-target species, such as butterflies and beneficial insects, as well as the health of soil and aquatic ecosystems. They are also resistant to a herbicide that will soon have to be taken off the market under new EU pesticide regulations.
- a growing body of scientific evidence published in scientific journals over the last few years has established that there will be detrimental environmental effects of GM insect-resistant maize, if it is grown on a large-scale in Europe.
- a record of contamination cases and scientific studies indicate that GM crops will jeopardize conventional and organic farming. Moreover, as no harmonized laws exist in the European Union rendering the agrochemical companies liable for contamination caused to non-GM farmers, polluters never pay damaged farmers;
- in December last year, all 27 member states unanimously called for a review of the present GMO approval system. In particular they called for a substantial improvement of the risk assessment of GM crops, the harmonization of GMOs and pesticide risk assessment, the consideration of socio-economic aspects as well as local environmental and agronomic characteristics; and
- the current Commission proposals to grow Bt11 and 1507 GM maize varieties and to force countries to grow MON 810 clearly contradict this Member States' mandate.

I urge you to vote against these Commission proposals and request that you publicly announce your position and voting intention on these landmark GMO issues.

Sincerely,

NAME, Firstname	Address	Signature