

Day 2: GMOs – Workshop 1

Focusing on scientific risk assessment

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1. Is it possible to carry out long-term monitoring? Does the risk assessor feel that this is viable?
2. Environmentalists keep saying that GMOs are a threat to the environment – what is the truth?
3. Does the risk assessment of GMOs under the current legislation meet all the requirements introduced through the new draft food legislation on food and feed?
4. In BEUC's comments to the Commission concerning the draft legislation we highlighted the need for an amendment of the risk assessment procedure of GMOs, with regard to the urgent need for:
 - A minimum list of macro- and micro-nutrients, anti-nutrients, inherent plant toxins, secondary metabolites and endo-allergens to be analysed for each crop species;Validated techniques to establish the content of these compounds in the (GM) plants and common methods to statistically analyse the data;
Further nutritional, toxicological and immunological evaluation, where there are differences in the composition of a GM food crop and its non-GM reference, whether intended or unintended. For detecting differences, in particular, with a view to unknown substances in plants, validated methods based on genomics, proteomics and metabolomics should rapidly be developed and incorporated into the approval process;
Risk assessment to take into account the assessment of the border regions of the inserted sequences, the reason being that the expression of endogenous genes may be altered as a result of the inserted promoters or terminators;
 - Detailed protocols on the design of the field trials for collecting compositional data of a GM food crop and its non-GM reference, with respect to the setting of field trials for GMO crops;
 - Further scientific work to develop our understanding of the relevance of animal feeding trials - feeding to mammals - to human consumption of GMO derived food products;The use of marker-free genetic modification. A GM food (ingredient) should not contain marker genes conferring resistance to antibiotics, or any other types of marker genes. The amount of DNA inserted should be as minimal as possible
 - To develop reliable tests to predict the extent to which foods derived from GMO might have an allergenic potential, and consider this on top of an epidemiological surveillance system.In the light of amendments of the risk assessment procedures can we be sure that these questions are properly addressed?
5. Thinking of our future and the introduction of new GMOs, do we feel that we are able to manage the introduction of genetic modification in food production?
6. What is necessary to properly handle the situation (can we properly separate non-GMO production from GMO production)?