

EU food agency rejects France ban on Monsanto GM maize

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Europe's food safety agency EFSA on Monday rejected the grounds for a temporary French ban on a genetically modified strain of maize made by US company Monsanto.

"Based on the documentation submitted by France, there is no specific scientific evidence, in terms of risk to human and animal health or the environment," EFSA said in a scientific opinion issued on its website.

A spokesman for Europe's health commissioner John Dalli said the EU executive "will consider how to follow up on this ruling, though technically we could ask France to raise its ban" on MON 810.

"The commission will wait for the conclusions of the next environment ministers' meeting June 11 in Luxembourg and hopes for a positive outcome to its proposals for cultivation, which have been blocked for almost two years by France and others," spokesman Frederic Vincent told AFP.

Paris had asked Brussels in February to suspend the cultivation of MON 810 on the basis of new scientific evidence after France's top administrative court in November overturned a government order banning the planting of genetically modified crops from Monsanto.

The court said that in a November 2008 ban, the government had failed to prove that Monsanto crops "present a particularly elevated level of risk to either [human health](#) or the environment".

Monsanto markets MON 810 maize -- which has been modified at a [genetic level](#) to include DNA from a bacteria -- under the trade name YieldGuard as being resistant to [insect pests](#) that can threaten [harvests](#).

But some governments believe it could pose a danger to [plants and animals](#).

France in February pointed to a recent study by EFSA that raised concerns over another form of GM crop, BT11, that it said could also be applied to MON 810.

The European Commission at the time requested EFSA's opinion on France's request, but said it would not take any steps in the meantime.

Monsanto said in January that it had no intention of selling [GM maize](#) in France as it felt the market was not ready.

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