

EU execs back OK for genetically modified corn (Update)

November 6 2013, by Raf Casert



European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy Tonio Borg addresses the media, at the European Commission headquarters in Brussels, Wednesday, Nov. 6, 2013. The European Union's executive Commission is backing plans to cultivate a genetically modified maize despite the objections of environmental groups which considers it dangerous. (AP Photo/Yves Logghe)

The European Union moved closer to approving the cultivation of a second genetically modified corn on the continent despite years of objections by environmental groups and widespread apprehension about

GMO food among European consumers.

Wednesday's approval by the EU Commission, the bloc's executive arm, now sends the plan to approve DuPont-Pioneer Maize 1507 to the EU's 28 member nations for consideration—and could lead to a decision on the issue within months.

EU member states have sharply diverging views on the cultivation of Genetically Modified Organisms—commonly known as GMOs—and decisions have been often been deadlocked for years. A continued stalemate over the next few months would throw the issue back to the Commission, which could then make the decision itself.

Since DuPont Pioneer had first applied for approval to commercialize the cultivation in Europe 12 years ago, it welcomed the latest step.

"1507 maize meets all EU regulatory requirements and should be approved for cultivation without further delay," the company said in a statement.

Environmental groups sharply criticized the EU Commission for opening the door to further GMO cultivation in Europe.

"Instead of banning this toxic maize (corn) and protecting both consumers and the environment, the European Commission has buckled once again to industry pressure," said Mute Schimpf of Friends of the Earth Europe.

It said the GMO corn was highly toxic and would harm the delicate habitat of butterflies and moths.

DuPont Pioneer, however, insists that its 1507 corn is grown throughout the world and had received no less than 7 positive safety reports from the

EU.

The EU has strict guidelines on authorizing and informing consumers about foods containing GMOs—a policy that has caused problems for producers of genetically modified seeds such as the U.S.-based Monsanto Co., which are used to less stringent rules around the world.

At the moment, Monsanto's MON 810 corn is the only GMO farm product cultivated in the EU, and even then, it only represents 1.35 percent of the EU's corn cultivation.

That contrasts sharply with the widespread use of GMOs in North and South America.

The European Commission also proposed to change the way that GMOs could be introduced in Europe, allowing individual member states to reject their cultivation based on a series of social or political grounds even if it has been approved throughout the EU on a scientific basis.

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