Italy asks EU to halt GM maize cultivation
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"MON 810", a variety of genetically modified maize (corn) developed by Monsanto Company is pictured during an action by anti-GMO activists calling for its ban on January 23, 2012 at a Monsanto storehouse in Trebes near Carcassonne, southern France.

The Italian government has asked the European Commission not to renew authorisation of a key genetically-modified corn, according to a letter seen by AFP on Thursday.

The product is US agri-giant Monsanto's MON 810 maize, one of only two GM products cleared to be grown in Europe along with German conglomerate BASF's Amflora potato.

Renewal of the maize licence is currently on hold due to hostility or reticence by a string of European Union states.

Eight countries—Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg and Poland—have banned GM crops on their soil.

The Rome request calls on Brussels to "suspend the authorisation of the cultivation of MON 810 maize seeds across all EU countries," citing detailed "environmental risks."