



European Plant Science Organisation
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Letter to Commissioner Dalli

Science based decisions on agricultural technologies, GM legislation and implementation

Mr John Dalli
European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium
John.dalli@ec.europa.eu

Brussels, 5. December 2011

Dear Commissioner Dalli,

Research Europe recently reported that two studies, conducted at the request of the European Commission, conclude that within the EU there is insufficient flexibility and freedom in the treatment of GMOs.

One report tells us that GM field trial applications are declining in Europe, and that “dissatisfaction and frustration are widespread”. The second reports that due to its treatment of GMOs, Europe has lost its leadership in agricultural biotechnology. As EU health commissioner, you commented that the problems of implementation of GMO legislation are not intrinsic to the laws themselves, but rather arise from the way these sensitive issues are handled at a political level.

We strongly support your attempts to find a way through Europe’s self-inflicted GMO impasse. EPSO regards it as essential that all decisions on the safety of GM crops and foods are based on a rational and independent scientific assessment. Where GM crops reduce the need for chemical applications to control pests or diseases, or results in the substitution of a dangerous with a more benign chemical, due consideration must be given to the cost of NOT approving, as well to any possible risks of approving their use. The competitiveness of European farmers is likely to be further compromised by unscientific decision-making on GMOs.

We would welcome that, in line with proposals in the United States, the practice in Canada and with what is currently being discussed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), that a reduced regulatory burden should be considered for special cases that have been well documented. In our view, the experience gained in these cases should allow for a revision of some of the current requirements for the use of genetically modified plants.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Jones, The Sainsbury Laboratory, Norwich, UK
Pere Puigdomenech*, Center for Research in Agricultural Genomics, Barcelona, ES
Karin Metzlauff, EPSO Executive Director

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About EPSO

EPSO, the European Plant Science Organisation, is an independent academic organisation that represents more than 227 leading academic research institutes, universities and departments from 30 countries. Together they represent over 28000 plant researchers and staff. In addition, EPSO has over 3000 personal members. EPSO collaborates with national learned societies active in plant sciences.

The mission of EPSO is to promote plant science and plant scientists, to represent plant scientists in discussions about future plant science programme priorities across Europe, to provide an authoritative source of independent information on plant science, and to promote training of plant scientists to meet 21st Century challenges in breeding, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, plant ecology and sectors related to plant science.

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