



# **EuroCommerce and GMOs: Transparency and freedom of choice for consumers**

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## What is EuroCommerce

- More than 100 members from 28 countries
- From retail, wholesale and international trade
- The closest link between industry and the nearly 500 million consumers

### Role:

- To promote the best interests of the trade sector with the EU institutions
- To improve the quality of legislation for the sector and reduce costs and uncertainties for businesses
- To provide comprehensive information to members on EU developments impacting their daily activities



## Consumers are not yet convinced



- Doubts about the national and EU authorities
- Doubts about the scientists
- Lack of unanimity: scientists, politicians, lobbies
- *GMOs* acceptable for medical use, but not for food
- Concerns over safety, the environment, the economy and responsibility
- Eating is an activity that involves (positive) emotions



## Consumers demand transparency

- Labelling guarantee consumer information about products that have been obtained from genetically modified plants.
- The retail trade is in favour of these Regulations - Consumers should be able to decide themselves whether or not they want to buy *GMO* products.
- Despite a better labelling legislation, nothing has changed on the shelves of the supermarkets . . .



## The response of retailers



- Retailers adapt their offer to the consumer's wishes
- Most retailers exclude the use of genetically modified raw materials in their own-label products
- As long as there is not an acceptance by the majority, no GM products will be included in their product ranges
- There is still no communicable benefit for consumers...



# Coop's Genetic Engineering Guidelines

## Gentechnik-Richtlinie

### Gentechnik bei Coop - Transparenz und Wahlfreiheit

Coop setzt sich für einen verantwortungsvollen und sinnvollen Umgang mit der Gentechnik in Produktion und Verarbeitung von Lebensmitteln und Konsumgütern ein.



Coop erlaubt in den Produkten der Coop-Eigenmarken keine Zutaten und Zusatzstoffe aus gentechnisch veränderten Rohstoffen. Zwar werden heute in den USA, Argentinien und Kanada gentechnisch veränderte Soja- und Maispflanzen grossflächig angebaut. Die langfristigen Auswirkungen dieser meist herbizid- oder insektenresistenten Pflanzen auf die Umwelt sind aber der Sicht von Coop noch zu wenig erforscht, um einem grossflächigen Anbau vorbehaltlos zuzustimmen.



Coop gestattet die Verwendung von Vitaminen oder Enzymen, die mit gentechnischer Methoden produziert wurden. Die Herstellung erfolgt in geschlossenen Systemen, vergleichbar der Herstellung von Medikamenten. Diese Produktionsweise ermöglicht im Vergleich zur chemisch-synthetischen Herstellung wesentliche Einsparungen an Ressourcen wie Energie, Wasser und Rohstoffen.

et non-ioniques; détergents actifs anioniques et non-ioniques.  
2% - Enzyme; enzymes; enzimi (Protease, Lipase)\*  
1% - Parfum/Schmutzträger/Schaumregulator; parfum; régulateur de mousse; profumolagenti antie

\* Mit gentechnischen Methoden hergestellt.  
\* Produits par technologie génétique.  
\* Prodotti con la tecnologia genetica.

Coop informiert offen über Einsatz, Nutzen und Risiken der Gentechnik und verpflichtet sich dafür ein, dass die Wahlfreiheit der Konsumentinnen und Konsumenten gewährleistet bleibt.



**Coop does not allow the use of ingredients or additives from genetically modified raw materials in Coop own-label products. Coop allows the use of vitamins and enzymes that have been produced by genetic engineering methods.**



## Limits of transparency: animal products



- *GM feed* has been subject to labelling since 2004...
- But meat, dairy products or eggs from animals that are fed with *GM* products need not be labelled.
- However: Consumer organisations and NGOs are demanding the labelling of these products. Critical consumers want to know how animals have been fed.
- Producers and the retail trade must have the chance to inform consumers about *GMOs* in feed so that consumers can make an informed choice.



## "Produced without genetic engineering"

- Some countries have issued specific regulations for the "Produced without genetic engineering" declaration.
- The requirements also encompass substances like food-additives manufactured "with the help of" genetically modified micro-organisms in closed systems.
- Since these substances are widely used, this declaration is only applicable in a few instances.
- EuroCommerce calls on the EU Commission to adopt standardised measures regarding the information provided to consumers on conventional products.



## Consumers demand freedom of choice



- Consumers want to be able to choose between genetically modified, conventional and organic products.
- Retailers acknowledge this demand and support clear rules for coexistence in agricultural production.
- To ensure reliable compliance with the current 0.9% limit for food and feed, adventitious contamination must be minimized at all levels.
- EuroCommerce is calling for the adoption of rules on co-existence based on EU guidelines.



## Freedom of choice begins with the seed



- With the spread of genetically modified plants, there is a growing danger of higher levels of contamination with *GMOs*.
- The measures to limit the spread of *GMOs* must be taken by those who grow and market the *GMOs*.
- The measures have to start with the seeds. If limits of 0.5% are tolerated in seeds, there is no leeway for the subsequent stages.
- EuroCommerce urges the Commission and the Member States to adopt strict purity standards regarding *GM* contamination of seeds.



## Where are the limits of freedom of choice?

- Establishing separate goods flows along the entire chain is complex and expensive.
- Producers and retailers will therefore have to examine carefully where it is worthwhile introducing such systems.
- As experience in the feed industry shows, the decision is usually "either GMO or conventional" and not "both GMO and conventional".



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## Conclusions

- Consumers still have an unenthusiastic or even negative attitude to GMOs.
- Although transparency has improved greatly with the Regulations in force for the past two years, not all labelling issues have been satisfactorily resolved from the consumer's point of view.
- If the different production methods are to be able to coexist, strict rules will be needed, starting with seeds. It will also be necessary to create conditions that do not place the cost burden solely on conventional or organic products.



Thank you!

