

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL HEALTH
Held in Brussels on 29 September 2008
(Section Genetically Modified Food & Feed and Environmental Risk)

Chair: Ms Dorothée André

SECTION A Information and/or discussion

1. Review of the emergency measures on LLRice 601

A Commission representative provided the Member States with an update of Commission Decision 2008/162/EC amending Decision 2006/601/EC on emergency measures regarding the non-authorized generically modified organism 'LL RICE 601' in rice products . This included a summary of the Rapid alerts notified to date for food and feed products in the EU. Several Member States also supplied supplementary data on official controls which had been carried out at the point of entry, and on the market. The majority of these controls were negative although there were still some pending results. It was also indicated that a further update would take place following publication of the DG SANCO's report of the Food and Veterinary Office 'to evaluate the control activities in the US for Commission Decision 2006/601/EC as amended regarding emergency measures for rice exports to the EU'. The next update will also include available test results from the US Rice industry for the 2008 rice harvest.

2. State of play on the emergency measures on Bt63 rice

Following an update on the implementation of Decision 2008/289/EC on emergency measures regarding the non authorized genetically modified organism "Bt 63" in rice products, a Commission representative informed the Member States of the last rapid alerts received. Member States were also informed of the content of a letter recently addressed by the Chinese authorities to the Commission. This letter analyses the recent rapid alerts notified to the RASFF system and requests further exchange of information to identify the nature and sources of the recent contamination cases found upon arrival in the EU.

Member States were also informed about the preparation of the control mission of the Food and Veterinary Office in China. The mission will take place between the 25th of November and the 4th of December. The itinerary is still under the definition but the aim is to check the different steps of the cultivation, storage, processing and export of rice products with a particular attention to the way the analytical tests for the detection of Bt63 are carried out. The Decision should more generally provide information about the way GMOs are regulated and controlled in China.

3. State of play on technical solution for the issue of Low Level Presence on non-approved GMOs

A Commission representative provided the Member States with a rapid update of the follow-up of the College debate of 7 May 2008, on the issue of low level presence of non approved GMOs.

It was indicated that DG SANCO, in co-operation with the Joint Research Centre, is currently working on a series of different possible options to address the situation without changing the legislation.

While the legal and technical feasibility of the different options are analysed, the urgency of the measure will probably have to be reassessed against the important evolution of the sector in the last weeks: the global decrease in feed prices and, more specifically, the authorisation of the GM soybean Bayer Liberty Link in September and the presentation of the draft decision for the approval of Monsanto RoundupReady2.

SECTION B Draft presented for an opinion

4. Discussion and possible opinion on a draft Commission Decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of, or produced from genetically modified soybean MON89788 (MON-89788-1) pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council

The opinion on Soybean MON89788 adopted by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was firstly presented to Member States, followed by the presentation of the comments made by the public on this opinion and the related draft Commission Decision. This was followed by a discussion on these documents and the vote on the draft Decision.

The following considerations were mentioned by Member States as reasons for not supporting the draft Decision:

- the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) opinion is not considered as fully satisfactory;
- the need for further internal consultations;
- Regulation on GM food and feed is not considered as the right legal basis to authorise products other than food and feed containing and consisting of GMOs;
- the monitoring plan is considered as not sufficiently demanding;
- the negative public opinion with respect to GMO;
- other political reasons.

Vote: no opinion (160 votes in favour, 69 votes against, 106 abstentions, 10 votes not represented)

Subsequently, the Chairman indicated that the Commission would be invited to submit a proposal to the Council in accordance with the Regulatory procedure.

5. Miscellaneous

A Commission representative reiterated the context and the objectives of the establishment of a legal framework for the risk assessment of GM food and feed and a description of the different steps in the process was presented. The scope of the exercise was defined and covers only the GM food/feed risk assessment but not the risk assessment of GMOs for import and processing and cultivation.