Citizens' summary

EU report - coexistence of GM crops with conventional and organic farming

BACKGROUND

- EU rules on genetically modified crops are comprehensive:
  - growing GM crops requires authorisation based on a rigorous safety assessment (environmental and health impact)
  - food and feed derived from GM crops must be labelled as such, to inform consumers.
  - technical and administrative measures must be taken to ensure GM crops can sustainably coexist with conventional or organic farming (e.g. limiting cross-fertilisation of plants in neighbouring fields)

- In Europe, cultivation of GM crops is still comparatively small-scale (2008 figures):
  - world-wide - 125 million hectares
  - EU - 100 000 hectares in six EU countries, largely Spain (just one type - a GM maize (MON810) resistant to certain pests).

WHAT DOES THE REPORT SAY ABOUT GM COEXISTENCE?

- It gives an overview of GM coexistence measures implemented so far in EU countries - Governments (especially those that have yet to introduce their own measures) and stakeholders can use it to compare approaches in this new policy field.
- It summarises Commission work on GM coexistence.

Main conclusions:

- EU countries have made significant progress formulating GM coexistence laws in recent years
- production of GM crops has expanded slightly (but is still very limited)
- GM crops have not caused any demonstrable damage to existing non-GM farming
- GM coexistence measures vary by country - in part due to regional differences in farming conditions (field sizes, climatic conditions, etc.)
- this has not caused any problems where there are different rules on each side of a border.

WHAT ARE THE RESPECTIVE ROLES OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE EU?

National governments – rather than the EU – are generally best placed to identify the most effective and efficient GM coexistence measures, given local agricultural and climatic conditions

- Where coexistence of certain crops is difficult to achieve due to local conditions, areas may be designated where only GM or non-GM varieties of a given crop can be grown.

  These measures should be based on voluntary decisions by all farmers in that area, so they can choose between conventional, organic and GM.

- Liability rules for potential economic damage from mixing GM and non-GM crops.
Every EU country has rules for compensation of economic damage in their national civil law. Some have also opted for specific compensation rules for GM coexistence.

There is no need for the EU to interfere with – or attempt to standardise – national civil law on this issue. However, to meet the clear need for better guidance for governments on how to develop efficient technical GM coexistence measures, the EU has created the European Coexistence Bureau to produce guidelines.

**WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

The EU will:

- continue to monitor and report on GM coexistence, ensuring national measures do not distort competition within the EU.
- continue networking with national authorities
- develop crop-specific technical guidance for GM coexistence measures,
- produce an economic assessment of the need to develop new rules on the presence of GMOs in seeds
- perform further research.