



## Commissioner Dalli admits EU food safety regime must change

- Conference hears shocking evidence that key herbicide linked to deformities in unborn children
- Carrefour Group among major retailers vowing to maintain non-GMO policy
- Minister declares Brussels a GMO-free region

### Press release in French below

Brussels, 16 September 2010 - Europe's health and consumer affairs commissioner John Dalli endured a barrage of criticism from delegates at a GMO-Free Regions conference in Brussels today (Thurs).

Dalli rehearsed a Commission proposal to give member states new rights to ban GMO cultivation, but admitted to delegates that the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) needed to be reformed.

The Commissioner was responding to challenges from well-known farmer and vice chair of the European Parliaments' agricultural committee José Bové, who called for "draconian" reform of EFSA. One delegate called EFSA "a farce" of revolving doors and corporate control. Dalli said that as a non-scientist he was not able to judge the quality of EFSA's work, but admitted that there was criticism of the agency in many areas and invited Bové and other NGOs to be part of the reform process.

He added the recent case of contamination involving the BASF GM potato Amadea in Sweden had strengthened his hand, reinforcing the need for better monitoring of GMOs throughout the production process.

Bové summed up the feeling among delegates: "*Nobody should be forcing us to consume GMOs or destroy our farming for GMOs. It's a political choice which is why we are here today.*"

Wallonian agriculture minister Benoit Lutgen called for a quality based agricultural reform: "This is one of the reasons Wallonia is a member of the network of GMO-free regions," he explained.

Evelyn Huytebroeck, environment minister of the Region of Bruxelles announced to the conference that just today the regional government of the Capital of Europe had also taken the decision to become a GMO-Free Region.

The conference, held in the European Parliament building, brought together around 300 representatives from GMO-free regions, initiatives, farmers, environmental and consumers organizations of all EU member states and members of the European Parliament. The total

number of GMO-free regions and municipalities with the EU has now exceeds 4,000 with the latest member being the Capital of Europe itself.

Commenting on Commissioner Dalli's proposal to leave GMO cultivation decisions to the member states, Benedikt Haerlin, on behalf of the organizers, said: "We appreciate that the EU Commission finally seems to accept that GMOs cannot be forced on European citizens and farmers. However, Mr Dalli failed to address serious issues of health and environmental risks that need to be regulated at community level."

Leading Argentinean embryologist, Professor Andrés E. Carrasco of the University of Buenos Aires, presented shocking research findings linking the herbicide Roundup, used on about 70% of all GM crops, to facial deformities and neural defects among unborn human babies. Though the research was published in the August edition of Chemical Research in Toxicology, Professor Carrasco has faced physical threats when trying to present his work in South America.

Haerlin added: "The battle against GMOs is much more than a technology issue. It is about diverse ecological agriculture and rural development, driven by independent farmers and their quality products, rather than commodity-oriented global agri-industries. This is a turning point for the next reform of the Common Agricultural Policy."

This approach was supported by representatives of major food and retail companies present, including Carrefour Group and EDEKA Nord. They vowed to maintain their non-GMO policy for products that must be labeled under the current EU legislation. Delegates reiterated long-standing demands for mandatory labeling of GMO-fed animal products. Voluntary labeling schemes for GMO-free meat, milk and eggs have increased their share in the market substantially, showing consumer demand for guaranteed transparency and choice.

Participants warned the Council and Parliament against any bargaining of health and environmental safety for national rights to ban GMOs, which de facto already exist. Instead, a moratorium on GMO approvals should be imposed at EU level until the Commission has rectified problems regarding risk assessment, strict seed purity laws and thorough consideration of socio-economic impacts on farmers and food producers.

For pictures from the conference, contact Volker Gehrman on 0049 1570 3352070 or email [info@bantam-mais.de](mailto:info@bantam-mais.de)

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See also the press area of the GMO-free regions website: [www.gmo-free-regions.org/conference\\_2010/press.html](http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/conference_2010/press.html)