

Cultivation of GMOs in EU should be 'completely restricted'

Written by Marijana Petir on 23 October 2014 in Feature
Feature

Marijana Petir argues that governments should stand up to multinationals and ban them from planting GMOs within their territory.



In the Republic of Croatia, in accordance with the current legislation, it is not possible to release genetically modified living organisms (GMOs) into the environment. All the counties in the Republic of Croatia have adopted appropriate decisions prohibiting the introduction of GMOs into the environment, even for experimental purposes. Regarding the use of agricultural land, priority is given to ecological and conventional methods of growing crops.

If certain multinational companies attempted to introduce GMO seeds to Croatian agricultural areas devastated by floods, referring to it as "humanitarian aid", not only would this be illegal, but it would also be deceptive for farmers. And that's not all. It would irreversibly destroy local food production, rural family farms, biodiversity and tourism. I would consider such an attempt on the part of some multinationals as an attack on Croatian sovereignty, and a disrespectful act towards the Croatian legal system.

Jean Bodin, the creator of the concept of sovereignty, established its essential characteristics as well as the borders of a sovereign government. He defined the main border as follows: "God's and nature's laws". Four centuries later, political leaders have gained an opportunity to overstep this border. Instead of respecting the natural order of life, they have introduced GMOs into nature.

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An organisation is able to control seeds by patenting them in whatever way they like. By making a seed sterile, a company actually wants to make farmers dependent on that seed, and thus wants to take control over food production and the entire food chain. This is unacceptable, and if it takes place under the guise of humanitarian aid, it is immoral, just like it is immoral to make massive profits by controlling nature and people.

The example mentioned above can be linked to changes made by the European parliament and council to a directive on the deliberate release into the environment of GMO's, due to be adopted shortly. This would allow member states to restrict or ban the cultivation of GMOs on their territory. With regards to the EU, the best case scenario would be for the cultivation of GMOs to be completely restricted. However, since a consensus has not been reached, it is necessary to ensure that member states have the right to decide independently whether or not to allow the release of live GMOs into the environment within their territory.

Last July, the council of the environment ministers put forth a proposal which would give the applicant (multinationals) more power than the state (which holds legitimate sovereignty). In my opinion this is unacceptable.

According to the EU acquis, the state is responsible for managing risks in the long-run, and in fact shares this responsibility with its citizens. If the state cannot make decisions regarding these risks, we cannot talk about state sovereignty. In this case, state sovereignty is abolished. The EU treaty provisions provide no legal basis for such situations. In addition, the competent EU authorities cannot be held accountable for poor and potentially damaging decision making.

I would like to use this opportunity to invite our neighbours from Slovenia, Italy, Austria and Hungary to ban planting GMO seeds in their countries, as Croatia has done. Please also support my initiative to establish Alpe-Adria as a GMO-free region, in order to protect domestic food production, biodiversity and tourism.

About the author

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