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EU must reinstate science in GMO safety assessment and eliminate unnecessary animal testing

Written by EuropaBio on 17 April 2018 in Press Release
Press Release

Beat Späth, Director of Agricultural Biotechnology at EuropaBio, calls for an end to unneeded animal testing.

Photo credit: Press Association

17 April 2018, Brussels: Reacting to the outcomes of the EU research projects GRACE, G-TwYST and GMO90+ **presented this week** **[1]**, Beat Späth, Director of Agricultural Biotechnology at EuropaBio, calls for an end to unneeded animal testing. “In light of the clear scientific evidence, political interference with GMO risk assessment has to stop,” he said. “If the EU is genuinely serious about being consistent with its own legislation aiming to replace, reduce and refine the use of animals used for scientific purposes and its policy to follow the science, wasteful and unnecessary animal tests should no longer be required.”

The results of the research projects, which were funded with more than €11m of European taxpayers' money, show, yet again, that the mandatory requirement to conduct rodent tests for safety assessment lacks any scientific basis. In 2013, the EU imposed mandatory 90-day animal feeding trials for GM food and feed risk assessment despite the clear scientific advice of the EU's risk assessment body, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), which repeatedly dismissed the mandatory requirement as unnecessary. The requirement remains in clear contradiction with the globally maintained principle of science-based risk assessment.

In 2013, the Commission was instructed to review the requirement for mandatory 90-day feeding studies by 30 June 2016 on the basis of the outcome of the EU research project GRACE. An independent academic consortium of the GRACE project concluded in November 2015 that there is no scientific justification for a mandatory 90-day study. To our knowledge, the Commission has still not published this review.

Mandatory feeding studies do not add to product safety nor build trust in the EU's authorisation system for GMO imports. They only add further to the well-documented unnecessary delays in the process at the needless expense of animals.

"We support the objective of increasing trust in science and in the EU's safety assessment procedure. One of the lowest hanging fruits is to make sure that the safety assessment requirements are, at the very least, science-based," added Späth.

Notes to the Editor:
• Over the past 25 years, the EU has spent well over €300m on over 50 complementary studies on GMOs, consistently confirming the world-wide scientific consensus that all safety assessed GM crops are at least as safe as conventionally bred crops.
• Further on the theme of trust in science and decision-making, see also EuropaBio **position paper** **[2]** and **press release** **[3]** on transparency and sustainability of risk assessment.
• Europe benefits greatly from **GM crop imports** **[4]**, and GM maize cultivation in Spain has provided considerable benefits after **almost 20 years** **[5]**.
• The same GMOs approved in other countries in two years often take up to seven years for import approval in the EU. See EuropaBio's **risk assessment timeline factsheet** **[6]**.

About the author

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About EuropaBio
EuropaBio, the European Association for Bioindustries, promotes an innovative and dynamic European biotechnology industry. EuropaBio and its members are committed to the socially responsible use of biotechnology to improve quality of life, to prevent, diagnose, treat and cure diseases, to improve the quality and quantity of food and feedstuffs and to move towards a biobased and zero-waste economy. EuropaBio represents 76 corporate members and 17 national biotechnology associations and bioregions.
Read more about our work at **www.europabio.org** **[8]**.

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