



PRESS RELEASE

Joint Spanish, Romanian and Portuguese delegation calls for fairer access to GM Crops and technologies

Brussels, 12 July 2010

Today and tomorrow a delegation of Spanish, Romanian and Portuguese farmers and farming associations meet in Brussels to demand fairer access to the agricultural biotech products and technologies available to their global competitors.

The group has come to Europe's capital to highlight the extent to which the EU is disadvantaging its farmers and its agricultural sector in general in terms of producing more food more sustainably, using fewer resources. They are calling for science-based decision making, better access to EFSA approved GM crops and food and feed as well as workable coexistence measures that do not discriminate against those farmers that wish to grow GM crops.

Speaking at the event, Dan Botanoiu Executive Manager of the Romanian National Farmer's Federation said: "Before accession to the EU, Romania was producing €150 million worth of GM Soy. Since Europe has not approved cultivation of this crop, when we joined the Union we immediately lost this income. As a result we are now importing 500,000 tonnes of soy from South America each year just to meet our domestic needs. The net result is we lose our own income and we have to find the finances to buy-in what we used to produce, with the finances going to our competitors in the Americas. In our view this is completely unnecessary and unsustainable"

Antonio Villarroel, Secretary General of the Spanish biotech association ANTAMA added "We demand that Spanish farmers have the right to access the same technologies available to farmers elsewhere in the world. Many Spanish farmers have successfully adopted the cultivation of GM maize which is allowing them to produce greater yields of higher quality food using fewer resources. But we have real fears that the new proposals that the Commission will announce tomorrow will make it harder and harder for us to coexist successfully with other types of farming. We believe these proposals will discriminate against us unfairly and that they could result in impossible coexistence measures being imposed upon us"

The delegations including farmers, agronomists and a range of stakeholders held a workshop to highlight their situation and concerns this morning and will meet with a range of stakeholders asking for their concerns to be heard and reacted upon this afternoon and tomorrow. They will then go to the European Parliament to hear Commissioner John Dalli make the announcement of the new nationalisation proposals.

Gabriela Cruz, a Portuguese Farmer, concluded: "We have already made a relative success of growing GM crops in successful co-existence with other types of farming in Portugal. In doing this we have seen massive benefits for both our farmers and our environments. But we are genuinely worried that the Commission's new proposals will cause even greater confusion within regions and municipalities in Portugal. Already our farmers suffer because of contradictory decisions at the level of Portuguese administration restricting a higher adoption rate of GM crops. This means that GM farmers cannot access the agro-environmental supporting measures that other farmers are entitled to, just because they are growing GM. We fear even more unfair discrimination in the future and we want to be here and on record as being totally opposed to any proposal which worsens these inequalities"

For further information or a meeting or interview with members of the delegation in Brussels at the European Parliament on 13 July please contact:

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