

**Brussels, 10 October, 1999**

**WHY THE ARTICLE IN NATURE MAGAZINE ON 'SUBSTANTIAL EQUIVALENCE ' IS IRRELEVANT**

In its October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1999 issue, the magazine Nature publishes a letter under the title 'Beyond substantial equivalence' from a triumvirate of authors. They express doubt as to the safety of GM (genetically modified) crops: showing that GM food is chemically similar to its conventional counterpart is not adequate evidence that the GM food is safe for human consumption, they say.

The article suggests that any toxicologist or regulator would accept chemical similarity as an adequate basis for 'substantial equivalence' and disregards the recommendations made by the OECD in a workshop in 1997, in which plant breeders, toxicologists, nutritionists as well as regulators took part.

The workshop refined the concepts relevant to assessing substantial equivalence in such a way that presenting substantial equivalence as synonymous to chemical similarity is a caricature.

The group agreed that the components to be compared during an evaluation of substantial equivalence should be selected on a case-by-case basis. The more key-nutrients and toxicants typically associated with a crop the more components need to be analysed and assessed. Where differences between the modified and the conventional crop fall outside the range of values for a component found in that crop, further investigation would be required.