



Challenges Facing Agriculture and the Plant Science Industry in the EU

Approach to regulation on biotechnology and pesticides has left EU farmers at a competitive disadvantage, while the world's major farm markets continue to gain access to new technologies.

Brussels — 4 September 2018 — The EU's political environment and related regulatory decisions have led to reduced access to modern agricultural tools, such as plant biotechnology and crop protection products, putting pressure on agricultural productivity and an increasing reliance on imports, a report published today has revealed.

The report, "[The Challenges Facing Agriculture and the Plant Science Industry in the EU](#)", written by market analysts Agbioinvestor, compares EU agriculture to other major markets such as Brazil and the US where farm productivity has increased markedly.

In contrast to their competitors, the report notes the number of crop protection tools available to EU farmers has decreased significantly in recent years, while there continues to be a *de facto* ban across much of the region on the cultivation of GM crops.

Howard Minigh, President of CropLife International, which represents the plant science industry and commissioned the report, said the data in the report should be a wake-up call to European politicians and regulators.

"The challenges facing farmers today are immense with climate change pressures, increasing populations and the need to protect precious biodiversity and natural resources from expanding cultivated area. To meet these challenges, farmers need access to cutting-edge innovations, but in the EU they have one hand tied behind their back. We support the need for rigorous regulation to protect public health and the environment, but this report shows Europe has got the balance all wrong, and the impact will be serious and continue to hurt the continent for generations."

Jean-Philippe Azoulay, Director General of the European Crop Protection Association, said: "The continued depletion of the toolbox available to farmers to protect their crops is having, and will continue to have, significant consequences. The current approach to innovation makes it a real possibility that Europe will have to rely on importing even more of its food and feed in the future. Modern crop protection products are essential to assure a high standard food production. There is a real danger Europe will further disadvantage food production sector, and lose out to other regions in the world."

Beat Spaeth, Director Green Biotechnology at EuropaBio, said: “Whilst the EU remains reliant on other parts of the world for imported GM crops, it is effectively preventing itself from developing and applying the same tools inside its own territory. Perhaps even more worrying, needed approvals of imported GM crops are often delayed by the EU’s extraordinarily lengthy and sometimes scientifically unjustified assessment procedures. In addition to speeding up Europe’s status as a “museum of agriculture”, this predicament endangers the global trade balance with knock-on effects for EU farmers and consumers. Change is urgently needed to remediate this, so that Europe can contribute more substantially to improving food security.”

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Notes to Editor:

1. CropLife International is the voice of the global plant science industry. It champions the role of agricultural innovations in crop protection and plant biotechnology in supporting and advancing sustainable agriculture; helping farmers feed a growing population while looking after the planet; and progressing rural communities. The world needs farmers, and farmers need plant science. CropLife International is proud to be at the heart of helping farmers grow.
2. CropLife International members are: BASF, Bayer, Corteva Agriscience (Agriculture Division of DowDuPont), FMC, Monsanto, Sumitomo and Syngenta.