

Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP  
DEFRA  
Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London. SW1P 3JR  
UK

29th March 2004

Dear Minister,

The European Commission decided on 28 January 2004 to forward to the Council of the European Union a proposal authorising the marketing of sweet corn from genetically modified maize line Bt11 as a novel food under Regulation (EC) N° 258/97 (1).

The Irish Presidency has decided to include the Bt11 file on the agenda of the 26/27th April meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council.

I feel that the maize line Bt11 file presents a number of serious weaknesses:

- a) On 25th November 2003, the French Food Safety Agency pointed out the lack of data and toxicity studies for the sweet corn and indicated that "potential unexpected effects, due to an interference of the genetic transformation with the specific metabolism of this maize, cannot be excluded" (2).
- b) Research by the Belgium authorities questions the quality of the work done by Syngenta to identify whether the genes had been inserted as expected. They found that there were "uncertainties concerning the molecular data", unexpected DNA fragments present which need investigating and that Bt11 might be contaminated by an earlier GMO (Bt176). (3)
- c) A recent report by the Austrian Government gives a damning verdict for the Bt11 application (4). The researchers had access to the whole dossier and accompanying documentation. They concluded that there was no toxicological testing with the whole plant, there were no tests on the long-term effects of eating the novel protein, the test for allergic reactions was insufficient and that many of Syngenta's assumptions were false and the safety of Bt 11 was based on theoretical argument rather than evidence.
- d) During the first meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (5) concerning trans-boundary movements of GMOs, the EU and more than a hundred States agreed on 27th February 2004 to elaborate rules and procedures for liability and redresses (6) linked to the possible impacts of the GMOs on health and environment before 2008. Without these essential and fundamental economical rules, we urge the Council not to adopt any new GMO authorisations.

Moreover, opinion polls, studies and public debates show a massive and constant rejection of GMOs by the European public, not only out of safety concerns but also due to wider worries about the environment and corporate control of the food chain (7).

In light of these arguments I would strongly urge you to stand against the adoption of the maize line Bt11 dossier at the 26/27th April meeting of the Agriculture Council, and to support the preservation of the de facto moratorium on new GMOs.

I look forward to your response to the concerns raised in my letter.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Caroline Lucas MEP

1. COM(2004) 10 final. Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION authorising the placing on the market of sweet corn from genetically modified maize line Bt11 as a novel food or novel food ingredient under Regulation (EC) N° 258/97 of the European Parliament and of the Council.
2. [http://www.afssa.fr/actualites/index.asp?id\\_theme=1086&id\\_info=5401](http://www.afssa.fr/actualites/index.asp?id_theme=1086&id_info=5401)
3. [http://biosafety.ihe.be/TP/MGC\\_reports/Report\\_Bt11.pdf](http://biosafety.ihe.be/TP/MGC_reports/Report_Bt11.pdf)
4. Gaugitsch H, Spök A, Hofer H, Lehner P, Kienzl-Plochberger K, Valenta R (2003), Toxikologie und Allergologie von GVO-Produkten. Roten Reihe des Bundesministeriums für Gesundheit und Frauen - Sektion IV, Band /03
5. First meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Kuala Lumpur (23 - 27 february 2004)
6. <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/press/2004/pr-2004-02-27-bs-en.pdf>
7. Cf. for example the EU-funded study "Public Perception of Agribiotechnologies in Europe" (may 2002): <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/depts/ieppp/pabe/>