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for the South East of England

Commissioner Mariann Fischer Boel
European Commission
200, Rue de la Loi
B-1049 Brussels

29th May 2009

Dear Commissioner Fischer-Boel,

Genetically Engineered Rice Crop LL62

I am writing to express my view that to allow import to the EU of the genetically engineered rice crop LL62 would be extremely ill-advised, for the following reasons.

1. Although rice is largely self-pollinating, pollen dispersal is strongly influenced by wind speed and direction, and can travel up to 100 metres. Cultivation of LL62 therefore poses real risks of cross-contaminating other non-GM rice crops and wild rice varieties.

Quite apart from the ecological implications of such contamination, it is pertinent to recall the financial disaster faced by the US rice market in 2006 when another GM rice variety from Bayer (LL601, known as "Liberty Link") contaminated global rice supplies: 63 percent of US rice exports were affected; contamination spread to at least 30 countries, and major importers closed their markets to US rice. As a result, at least three multi-million dollar lawsuits are now being filed by farmers and traders seeking damages from Bayer, and the whole disastrous mistake is estimated to have cost more than \$1.2 billion to the global rice industry.

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2. LL62 rice has been genetically engineered by Bayer to withstand high doses of glufosinate, a herbicide sprayed on rice fields to control a wide range of weeds. Wide-scale use of herbicide-tolerant rice is of course likely, therefore, to lead to an increase in use of this dangerously toxic substance, which poses a considerable risk to farmers and is potentially dangerous for consumers when eating food containing residues of the herbicide. The dangers of this herbicide have already been clearly recognised by the European Parliament, which voted in the context of the EU Thematic Strategy on Pesticides to ban its use by 2017.

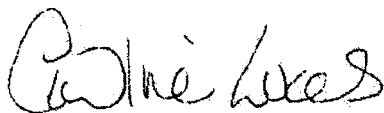
3. Finally, and crucially, rice is the world's most important staple food, and at the core of many communities' basic survival and livelihoods worldwide. It is grown in over 100 countries, consumed regularly by over two billion people and is a crop deeply embedded within the fabric of many communities' traditional knowledge and culture. By importing LL62 rice to the EU, Europe will effectively be supporting corporate control of this fundamental foodstuff, and endorsing the destruction of community ownership and the local knowledge of rice production currently held by millions of people globally.

The importance of all three of these points should not be underestimated, and imply that to authorise these imports would be short-sighted and irresponsible. I sincerely hope and urge that the Commission therefore decide not to allow such imports. Please could you advise whether this is indeed the case, and of the Commission's response to each of the concerns raised above.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With thanks for your attention,

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas MEP