

Letter from:
Friends of the Earth Europe
Greenpeace
EEB

Report on Organic Regulation Proposal by Mrs Aubert, MEP:
Call to MEPs to vote in favour of Amendment 41

Dear MEP,

On February 27th, next Tuesday, the Agriculture Committee will vote on its Report on the Proposal for a Council regulation on organic production and labeling of organic products (COM(2005)0671 – C6-0032/2006 – 2005/0278(CNS)).

Whilst the proposal for a regulation covers a wide range of points related to organic production, we are writing specifically concerning the labelling threshold for GMOs.

The Regulation mentioned above is proposing to allow GMOs in organic products up to 0.9% WITHOUT labelling. Whilst GMO content must in such cases be “adventitious or technically unavoidable”, it is our firm opinion that to allow genetic contamination in organic products will ultimately put the sector’s survival as GMOfree agriculture under threat.

We are writing to you therefore to urge you to reject this proposal and to support Amendment 41 which was adopted unanimously by all political parties for the Environment Committee Opinion 2005/0278(CNS):

“In this Regulation, the labeling threshold for GMOs as defined in Directive 2001/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 March 2001 on the deliberate release into the environment of genetically modified organisms shall not apply”

There is worrying evidence that the European Commission – under pressure to adopt a lax attitude towards contamination – is interpreting the 0.9% threshold to mean acceptable contamination and ignoring the accidental or unavoidable nature of contamination which is so clearly stated in EU law (Food and Feed Regulation 1829/2003).

Secondly, organic production is distinct from conventional production both in terms of standards and purity as well as with regards to public perception. The European public very clearly considers organic produce to be GMOfree, that is to say zero GMO content: not “a bit” GMO, not “almost” no GMOs, but zero.

Such decisions represent a huge responsibility because they concern the development, if not the survival, of an important agronomic sector. Indeed organic farming is the only agricultural sector to show any growth in Europe as well as high potential in developing countries where organic holdings are growing in triple digit figures.

Recent rice contamination incidents have clearly illustrated to what degree GMO contamination is a problem. It is therefore urgent for the European Parliament to send a

clear message to the Commission and to the Council that it will not tolerate the contamination of organic production, and that the wishes of citizens, including their clear opposition to eating GMOs, must be respected.

Strict standards for organic production must not result in the sector being stifled, and all measures to allow an enabling environment for organic farming must be committed to and implemented to ensure that the GMOfree organic sector can continue to thrive. This right must be protected under EU law.

We therefore urge you strongly to vote in favour of amendment 41 and to support the development of GMO free organic agriculture.

Yours sincerely