

## GM Freeze demands proper EU consultation on GM contamination of seed

The campaign group GM Freeze has written to Mariann Fischer Boel, EU Agriculture and Rural Development Commissioner, demanding the extension of a European Commission (EC) consultation on the threshold for GM contamination of agricultural seeds from four weeks to a minimum of 12 weeks.

In its letter to Fischer Boel, GM Freeze points out that while the EC discussion of the controversial topic of setting GM contamination threshold for non-GM and organic seeds began in 2001, it now wants responses to the current consultation, issued last week, to be submitted by 5<sup>th</sup> June.

Any GM in seeds will prevent producers of food and animal feed being able to deliver what their customers demand - no detectable GM presence. The current consultation is therefore of interest to all parts of the food chain, from seed growers to final processors, retailers and consumers.

GM Freeze is concerned that the EC will try and force through a GM contamination threshold for seed that is as high as possible, while still permitting final food and feed products to be below the legal threshold for labelling GM content (0.9%). The organisation insists that any discussion of a threshold for seed should not focus on the consumer labelling threshold, but must also include the protection of the environment and health.

GM Freeze's letter points out that the current EC consultation period coincides with a very busy period for farmers, who will be sowing late crops, forage harvesting and tending planted crops in the period up to early June.

Pete Riley of GM Freeze says -

*"It is outrageous that such an important issue as GM presence in seeds should be subject to such a short period of consultation. This is a very busy time for farmers who will want to respond to this consultation. The tone of the consultation is that GM contamination of seeds cannot be avoided. This is not so if non GM seeds can be grown in sufficient isolation. In fact, the production of seeds without any detectable GM presence might offer many European farmers new business opportunities to provide for the huge non GM market in the EU. However, to take up these opportunities they will need the full support of a tough and well thought through legal framework and enforcement system. The European Commission is in danger of losing even more credibility on the GM issue if it persists with these poorly thought through proposals".*

**ENDS**