

Is it good news? MEP's vote on GM coexistence

The recent vote in the European Parliament for a maximum GM contamination level in EU organic products of 0.1% should be welcomed as a success for those of us who wish to keep organic food and farming free of GM contamination. The Organic Research Centre – Elm Farm welcomes this strong gesture from our elected representatives in Europe that there is no place for GM in organic agriculture. The vote now needs to be acted upon by the European Commission to ensure that legally binding measures are brought forward across Europe to ensure that organic producers can work practically to fulfil the 0.1% level without it destroying their sector in the process.

Over a number of years, The Organic Research Centre - Elm Farm has published detailed work and analysis on GM coexistence, contamination and adventitious presence. We have backed the requirement for organic inputs and systems to be at the lowest detectable level (0.1%) but with a 0.9% contamination maximum for labelling of organic produce where this presence is from truly adventitious presence. We took this stand for purely pragmatic and practical reasons. It is for these reasons that we still have reservations about the 0.1% level for organic production. Binding legislation now needs to be implemented, at an EU level, ensuring that the onus is placed on the GM farmers and processors to operate in a manner that will allow organic products to remain below 0.1%.

We also hope to see the European Parliament and the Commission now accept that responsibility for coexistence legislation needs to be taken back from individual Member States to ensure a proper pan - EU wide approach is pursued. Central to this new analysis is a revisiting of the proposed seed contamination levels (between 0.3% and 0.5%) as these are clearly not compatible with a maximum end contamination level of 0.1%. Legislation needs to be put in place that will not only protect organic farmers and producers but all those in the food chain who wish to remain GM-free. Without such laws this apparent step forward on GM coexistence is destined to become a hollow victory.

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