



To the Members of the EP DEVE Committee

Subject: GMOs and Development

31 May 2013

Dear Members of the EP DEVE Committee

In the Development Committee meeting on 19th February 2013 you discussed the briefing "*The impact of biotechnology in developing countries*" written by the Ecologic Institute and commissioned by the Directorate-General for External Policies of the European Parliament.

The general conclusion of the Ecologic Institute briefing is that GM crops should no longer be promoted in developing countries, as alternatives such as agro-ecology are available.

The organizations of farmers and public researchers listed below strongly disagree with this conclusion, since it is not supported by any evidence.

Adopting the conclusion of the briefing would result in a misleading basis for designing effective sustainable development and food security policies, and would deprive farmers of a powerful tool for improving human livelihoods, food security and sustainable farming.

Moreover, the overall conclusion of the briefing is inconsistent with the findings of the country-studies in the briefing, which suggest that the impact of GM crops can only be assessed on a case by case basis with regard to the environmental, social, political and economic context of the country where the GM crop is grown. The organizations below fully support such a case by case assessment, underlining that such an assessment should be done for all approaches in agriculture, including the so called 'agro-ecology' approach.

As is also recognised by the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) in their Opinion on the Ethics of modern developments in agriculture technologies (Opinion 24), such an assessment should take account of the need to ensure sustainability, food and feed security and safety."

The challenges posed by population growth, changes in consumption patterns, climate change, loss of arable land and environmental degradation advises against considering food security as a matter of "either this or that technology" as the authors of the report suggest.

FAO data show that demand for food, feed and biomass will rise by 70% by 2050. Most of this demand is likely to be from developing countries, which have the highest population growth rates. Today almost 1 billion people already suffer from chronic hunger and malnutrition in developing countries. This tragic situation will be made worse in the years to come due to the impacts of climate change, which is predicted

to reduce the availability of crucial factors of production such as water and land and change the multiplication rates and distribution of pathogens and pests.

Agriculture needs to produce more with less resources, and with less impact on the environment. In the very short term, farmers will therefore need crops and productivity farming practices that allow higher yields, that are less dependent on water, pesticides and fertilizers, that can grow on marginal land, that have enhanced nutritional value, etc.

As it has been recognized repeatedly since the Earth Summit in 1992, there is no single solution to these development challenges. These challenges can no longer be addressed by conventional breeding and 'agro-ecology' approaches alone. Addressing such challenges requires the involvement (and combination) of all the best available science and technologies including conventional, agro-ecological and many other innovative management methods with proven positive impact.

Genetic modification (GM) is a robust plant breeding technique that can be fully included in these technological innovations since it can help farmers in developing countries to improve crop yields, through increased resistance to pests and diseases, improved tolerance of drought and flooding and improving resilience during storage and transportation.

Regretting that the above quoted briefing was the only input to your discussion, the organizations of farmers and public researchers listed below kindly invite you to take into account the additional informative material attached to this letter. We strongly recommend that you base your future decisions on the role that GM crops can have in development policies on a plurality of sources of information, rather than on "one-sided" briefs such as that provided by the Ecologic Institute. The organizations below would very much welcome an opportunity to discuss this matter with your committee.

On behalf of: Asociación Agraria Jóvenes Agricultores (ASAJA, Spain), La Asociación Española de Productores de Vacuno de Carne (ASOPROVAC, Spain), National Farmers Union (UK), PRRI (Public Research Regulation Initiative), Futuragra (Italy), Innoplanta (Germany), Associação Nacional de Produtores de Cereais, Oleaginosas e Proteaginosas (Anpoc, Portugal)

Duilio Campagnolo, Chairman of Futuragra

Karl Friedrich Kaufmann, Chairman of Innoplanta

CC: M.Schulz, V.Moreira, M.Groote, P.De Castro, A.Sartori

Attachments:

1. *GM in Agricultural Development*, The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, UK
2. Juma, C. (2011), *Preventing hunger: Biotechnology is key*, Nature, 479, 7374, pp. 471-472,
3. Anthony, V. M. and M. Ferroni (2012), *Agricultural biotechnology and smallholder farmers in developing countries* Current Opinion in Biotechnology, pp. 8
4. PRRI letter to the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food Prof. Olivier de Schutter

