

**PRESS RELEASE**

December 5<sup>th</sup> 2008

**European GMO-free Regions Network**

**“The Council has missed an opportunity to enable regions and/or local authorities to determine GMO-free areas”**

The 48 member regions of the European GMO-Free Regions Network<sup>1</sup> warmly welcomed last July the initiative of the French Presidency of the European Union to create an “Ad-hoc” working group in the Council that would examine GMOs under the following areas:

1. Environmental assessment and monitoring arrangements;
2. Socio-economic criteria;
3. Scientific evaluation process;
4. Threshold for seeds;
5. Sensitive and/or protected areas.

This “Ad hoc” working group on GMOs, composed of Member States' representatives, prepared the conclusions on GMOs which the Environment Council approved yesterday.

The European GMO-Free Regions Network is pleased to see that the Council conclusions on GMOs duly address some critical points such as the GMOs authorization procedures, the better use of expertise and the lowest technically practicable threshold for seeds.

However, the European GMO-Free Regions Network would have preferred the Commission and the Member States to define a set of socio-economic and agronomic criteria which could be taken into consideration during the authorisation process of GMOs.

At the same time, the European GMO-Free Regions Network underlines the importance of regional and local administrations in sizing up the economic and societal impacts of GMOs inside their administrative boundaries.

We also believe that sensitive and or protected areas should be recognised as GMO-free zones on the basis of the precautionary principle without prior risk assessment. Moreover, we consider that Member States, Regions and/or local authorities should be allowed to recognize GMO-free zones created by voluntary agreements decided by the majority of economic operators and not by a unanimous decision.

---

<sup>1</sup> Burgenland, Kärnten, Niederösterreich, Oberösterreich, Salzburg, Steiermark, Tirol, Vorarlberg and Wien (Austria) / Wallonie (Belgium) / Sisak Moslavina and Varaždinska Zupanija (Croatia) / Euskadi, Menorca, Principado de Asturias and Gobierno de Canarias (Spain) / Aquitaine, Auvergne, Bourgogne, Bretagne, Centre, Corse, Franche-Comté, Ile-de-France, Limousin, Lorraine, Midi-Pyrénées, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Basse-Normandie, Haute-Normandie, Pays de la Loire, Poitou-Charentes and Rhône-Alpes (France) / Drama-Kavala-Xanthi, Tedkna and l'Union des Autorités Préfectorales (Greece) / Abruzzo, Bolzano, Emilia-Romagna, Lazio, Liguria, Marche, Molise, Piemonte, Sardegna, Toscana, Umbria (Italy) / Highlands and Islands, Wales (United Kingdom)

The European GMO-Free Regions Network firmly believes that regional and local governments should be allowed to determine GMO-free areas as a coexistence measure.

### Further Information

Contact the Secretariat of the Network of GM Free Regions on:

- +34/ 945 016 314 - [Azu-Salazar@ej-gv.es](mailto:Azu-Salazar@ej-gv.es) (Network's Secretariat in Euskadi) or
- +32/ 2 285 45 30 - [aitor-mintegui@ej-gv.es](mailto:aitor-mintegui@ej-gv.es) (Euskadi delegation in Brussels)

### Notes for Editors

- <http://www.gmofree-euregions.net>
- The European Network of GM Free Regions was established in November 2003 in response to the European Commission's recommendation of 23 July 2003 on guidelines for the development of national strategies and best practice for the development of national strategies for the coexistence of GM crops with conventional and organic farming.
- The European Network of GM Free Regions aims to preserve farmers' rights to grow organic and non-GM crops and consumers rights to reject GM food.