

Contribution of the regions and local authorities

AQUITAINE, BASQUE COUNTRY, LIMOUSIN, MARCHE, SALZBURG,
SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN, THRACE-RODOPI, TUSCANY, UPPER-AUSTRIA,
WALES

to the European debate on the

***COEXISTENCE OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS WITH
TRADITIONAL AND ORGANIC FARMING***

Introduction

The undersigned European regions and local authorities wish to offer the following reflections on the Commission Recommendation of 23 July 2003 on guidelines for the development of national strategies and best practices to ensure the coexistence of genetically modified crops with conventional and organic farming (2003/556/EC - OJ L 189 of the 29.7.2003);

This Recommendation of the Commission gives the Regions responsibilities and/or direct governing competences in the area of agriculture, of the environment, of consumer protection and of health;

It is the task of the regional governments and local authorities, respecting the division of responsibilities within each Member State, to ensure an integrated development of the local economies following the subsidiarity and coherence principles among the social, productive and environmental factors present on their own territories.

In this context, taking into account the studies, the considerations, the intentions and the sides taken by their own technical bodies and by the legislative or administrative assemblies, in order to make a contribution to the ongoing debate within the European institutions and in particular on the occasion of the formulation of the opinion of the European Parliament on the Commission Recommendation on coexistence, the European regions and local authorities

Offer the following comments

- a) Considering the shared will of pursuing the strategy of quality and excellence of products, protecting and improving the biodiversity on its own territories, intensifying and enhancing the significant economic and cultural value of the European farming on the world scene;

- b) Considering that to achieve these goals several Regions have invested and are still investing a considerable amount of human, technical, financial and/or administrative-legislative resources to ensure high quality and organic production systems;
- c) Considering that for these regions the acceptance of a coexistence of GM and GM FREE organisms as defined in the Commission Recommendation of 23 July 2003 could imply the fruitlessness of what has been made up to now by the public and private actors at the level of production system, regulation, and regional promotion;
- d) Considering the morphological, environmental, and farming system peculiarities of a great part of the European territory it might not be possible to guarantee GMO FREE production;
- e) Considering that it may not be possible to avoid genetic cross contamination; this could determine a situation of incompatibility with the preservation of organic agriculture and of all those high-quality products;
- f) Considering that the Commission has already officially granted the quality trademark for many products, it is necessary to protect them from cross contamination from GM products;

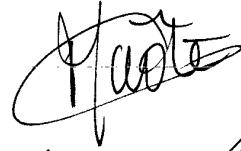
Request the Community institutions

1. to clearly define means of avoiding any distortion of competition and establishing a harmonised approach at the European level taking full account of the principle of subsidiarity;
2. to clearly specify the responsibilities, in case of contamination of products from the conventional and organic farming with genetically modified crops, on the basis of the "polluter-pays" principle;
3. to take all possible measures to avoid the presence of GMOs in the seeds for traditional products and organic farming;
4. to agree that the European regions could define their own territory or part of it as GMO FREE zone or region - taking into account the economic and environmental peculiarities and respecting the division of responsibilities within each Member State - without these decisions being considered as an infringement of the free movement of goods principle.

Brussels, 4th of November 2003

Aquitaine

Mrs Annie Hote-Chalbos



Basque Country

Mr Gonzalo Saenz de Samaniego



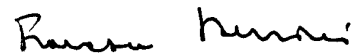
Limousin

Mr Robert Savy



Marche

Mrs Francesca Damiani



Rodopi-Evros (Thrace)

Mr Athanasio Goumas



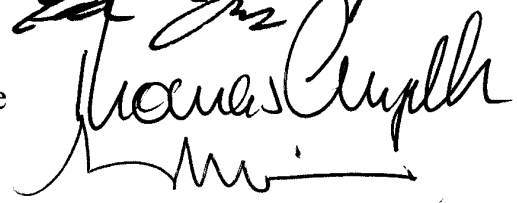
Salzburg

Mr Sepp Eisl



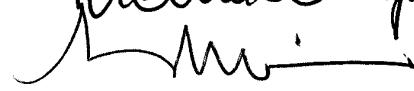
Schleswig-Holstein

Mr Thomas Engelke



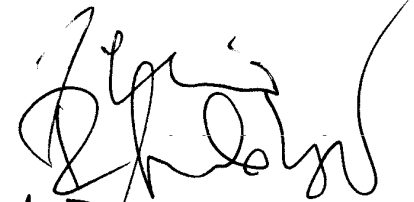
Tuscany

Mr Tito Barbini



Upper-Austria

Mr Josef Stockinger



Mr Rudi Anschober



Wales

Mr Huw Jones

