

IX CONFERENCE
OF THE GMO-FREE EUROPEAN REGIONS NETWORK

Erfurt

5th – 6th September 2012

ERFURT FINAL DECLARATION

Following the proceedings of Erfurt IX Conference of the 56 GMO-free European Regions Network and our previous Position Papers, the Network reaffirms its four guiding principles and objectives:

- Subsidiarity principle
- Precautionary principle
- Polluter-pays-principle
- Freedom of choice for everybody

We welcome the ongoing discussions at the EU level about the proposal to amend Directive EC/2001/18 regarding the possibility for the Member States to restrict or prohibit the cultivation of GMOs in their territory.

The Network reaffirms its position that grounds relating to local or regional environmental impacts, socio-economic and specific issues (i.e. organic and GMO-free productions, morphological and geographical conditions, land and soil spatial planning...) should be accepted as legitimate reasons for prohibiting GMO cultivation. We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss our views as part of any further consideration of these issues at the EU level.

We consider this an opportune time to focus the GMO debate on the need for transparent GM labeling to allow consumers a better freedom of choice.

We fully support regard to the concept of “freedom of choice” as well as consumer protection. The Network therefore considers maintaining the current zero tolerance principle for unapproved GMOs in seed and food is essential.

A Euro-barometer survey (November 2010) on the evaluation of foodstuff risks shows the Europeans' concerns about the genetic engineering: 66% percent of all Europeans think that GM technology poses a risk when applied to foodstuffs.

One fourth of all interviewed persons in the survey were "very concerned" about this issue. Therefore, GMO-labeling represents a key issue to be faced at national, regional/local and above all, at European level. Current European legal standards concerning GMO labeling, do not require all uses of genetic engineering in the food chain to be labeled. For example the use of GM feed in the production of meat, eggs and dairy products as well as the use of additives, enzymes and other adjutants produced by using GM micro-organism do not require labeling.

This is unacceptable and consumers and consumers' representative bodies have made it clear that they want the further development of the existing statutory labeling requirements to include GM products. The lack of this labeling requirement has resulted in several Member States developing their own Non-GM labels as an additional instrument to inform consumers and to preserve quality production methods and products. The Network believes a harmonized approach should be taken on this issue across the EU and a non-GM-label established at the European level. The Network proposes to further discuss non-

GM labeling with consumers and their associations, farmers and their associations, environmental associations and concerned institutions.

This will seek their views on the establishment of a European non-GM-label and other instruments of improving transparency and consumer choice.

The Network will therefore establish a Task Force to seek the views of consumers, farmers, their representative associations and environmental associations on Non-GM labeling to help inform the ongoing EU consideration of this important issue.

Erfurt, September 6th 2012

Erfurt Declaration text available at: <http://gmofree-euroregions.regione.marche.it>