

GMO-Monitoring in Upper-Austria

Linz, 21. April 2015

According to an order of the government of Upper-Austria the chamber of agriculture organises every second year a monitoring to recheck freedom of GMO in upper-austrian plant production.

Monitoring focuses on those cultures, which are carrying the risk for GMO-contamination. In Upper-Austria this applies to rapeseed, maize and soybean. We do not organise controls for cultures without risk for GMO-contamination.

Our monitoring focuses to following key aspects:

1. Seed-control

The most efficient way to keep plant-production GMO-free ist to keep seed free from GMO. Therefore we organise added seed-controls at breeders and local retailers of seed – of course only at rapeseed, soybean and maize.

In 2013 97 seed-samples had been controled and there was no GMO-contamination found. Controls had been done of course only in Austria and Upper-Austria. Seed controls had been done by the national authority for seed. (Federal office of food-safety, Bundesanstalt für Ernährungssicherheit).

2. Field-control

Of course it is possible in the open market off he EC, that a farmer organises seed in neighbouring countries or he might use farm-saved seed especially for soybean.

In a second step we take leaf-samples from growing fields. A sample consists of 500 leafes.

Taking those samples takes time and is rather tricky. Totally we collect 150 samples from fields following a risk-based control-plan

The samples are analysed at a laboratory accredited for GMO-analysis.

This year GMO-monitoring in Upper-Austria is organised for the fourth time. This year's monitoring is still at work. We have yet results from seed-testing. Field samples of rapeseed are in control and field-samples of maize and soybean will be done in June.

Only once we had a contamination in a seed-sample of maize in 2009.

In the meantime seed retailers and breeders are careful and make strong efforts to keep seed GMO-free. A lot of analysis is done to control freedom of GMO in seed also by breeders and retailers.

The costs of our monitoring amount to 35.000 €.

Conclusions:

Keeping fields free from GMO is possible if the whole sector acts carefully and is aware of the topic. The challenge for the future will be how „opting-out“ – the coming regulative for GMO in Europe will be realised in Austria and our neighbourhood. In the moment we have the situation, that we have no GMO-varieties in practical use in Austria as well as in our neighbouring countries. The most efficient way to keep fields free from GMO is control of seed. We should realise, that a contamination of seed for instance at rapeseed would explode in practice. A seed- lot of rapeseed of 20.000 kilos corresponds to a surface of 5 – 6.000 hectares.

I always wonder about, that there is so little control at this topic. There are only a few countries, where actually control in practical cultivation is done. We are happy to see, that Upper-Austria is a country where we can say „GMO-free“ - based on control.

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