GM-FREE REGIONS NETWORKS
DECLARATION OF RENNES
NOVEMBER THE 30th

Conscious of the economic, social, and environmental developments at stake in the agricultural and food development of GMOs, the European regions federated under the Genetic Modifications Free Regions Network wish to draw the attention of the European Commission, the States, and the public opinion of the Union to **their three motivations** :

a – The right to chose a lasting, GM-free agriculture :

The regions consider it to be of the utmost importance to safeguard in the long run a quality agricultural system, which does not resort to genetically modified organisms. Considering their undeniable impact on landscapes and socio-economic realities, genuine, sound agricultural practices are not only be considered as part of Europe's cultural heritage and diversity but likewise as the core of any regional action concerned with defending the welfare of its consumers.

b – Defending biodiversity :

Irreversible phenomenons may ensue from the rampant dissemination of GMOs among wildlife, thus adding to the threats on biodiversity. This is of major concern to regions worried about the very subsistence of the cycle of life and the welfare of generations to come.

c – Control and accountability over the use of GMOs :

European regions call for more accountability and democratic control over the decision to resort to genetically modified organisms. **Full transparency in the use of GMOs** is therefore requested. The regions urge for both a full coverage of the costs implied by separating GM and GM-free production-chains and the adoption of compensation mechanisms handling intended or accidental contamination.

The Charter of Florence of February 2005 has paved the way for establishing the guiding principles of the network. Supported in their stance by a growing, positive response, the member regions have initiated a **process of dialog and propositions** with the local and European authorities as well as with NGOs.

1 – The rules of co-existence are to be decided on a regional/local basis :

Current rules on coexistence between conventionnal and biological crops are being directly challenged by the outbreak of genetic modifications technology.

Since individual rules on coexistence cannot be set for obvious reasons, the focus should be put on the strong regional identity carried by agricultural products. **The regions therefore insist on the need that they be aknowledged as the relevant working scale for implementing coexistence between GM and non-GM crops**.

In order to ensure a full separation of the production-chain, geographical areas presenting a specific interest in terms of biodiversity or landscape shall be taken into account; areas relying on certified-origin products shall also be encompassed. Specific measures shall be taken to prevent cross-contamination between GM crops and GM-free crops.

Finally, the Network demands that rules banning GMOproducts benefiting from European-certified labels officially renounce resorting to any sort of GMO.

2 – Precautionary principle applied to the use of GMOs :

Dissemination of GMO may entail irreversible and uncontrollable effects on biodiversity. Negative public health implications of GMOs are not ruled out yet. Ultimately, appropriate answers must be worked out to cope with the potential impacts of GMOs. In this regard, the Network considers that the precautionary principle shall prevail and the Directive2001/18 be revised. Dispositions should include the **principle of pre-emptive actions**, along with dispositions regarding specific risks entailed by dissemination of genetically modified material on each species.

Moreover, in order to ensure a full safety in the use of GMO, it is necessary to **conduct follow-up, research, and action programs** aiming at a control of the potential impacts.

Regions demand that reliable sampling methods, critical points and transfer risks follow-up be implemented. Such methods must specifically aim at tracking GMOs. The regions demand **that a network of certified and independent laboratories** having access to all data related to GMO release authorizations in Europe be created.

Finally, European regions regret the lack of serious evaluation regarding the cost efficiency of the use of GMOs itself. Numerous basic aspects have not yet been taken into account, making it impossible to properly assess **cost-benefit analysis of GMOs for both producers and consumers**.

3 – Principle of legal and criminal accountability for operators

Operators are to be considered accountable for the consequences of dissemination of GMOs in production-chains where they are prohibited.

Indeed, efforts led by producers relying on the lasting appeal of their quality, certified-origin brand to consumers would be devastated by a contamination. Effects could immediately be felt on both the **economic** level, through drastic run-downs, and **social** level, a whole sector or area often being involved in the activity. **Environmental** spin-offs would follow quite shortly, since in many areas, producers are also taking care of the land.

The GM-Free regions Network thus urges for the European “polluter-pays principle” to be extended to cases of genetic contamination. Operators of genetic modification technology should provide a compensation fund intended for the victims of contamination, thus enabling them to face criminal and legal repercussions of the said contamination.

4 – The need for co-development between the producers.

Even though European agriculture is acquiring more **autonomy** in its production of **animal feed** and **research** is being carried out in this frame, it still needs a supply in protein-rich material, including soy, from **other geographical origins**.

The dilemma faced by European regions is all the more important, as GM animal feed is limited or even not authorized on their land. **It is therefore crucial that a safe supply in vegetal, GM-free proteins be guaranteed**.

Hence, the European regions members of the GM-free Network shall implement a process of co-development between areas where GM-free protein-rich materials are being produced and areas where they are consumed.