



C O N F E R E N C E R E P O R T

GMOs

co-existence or contamination?

Organised by Friends of the Earth Europe, Euro Coop, the Greens/European Free Alliance and the Heinrich Böll Foundation | BRUSSELS, 28TH MAY 2003



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CONFERENCE REPORT

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The organisers of the conference

The Greens/ European Free Alliance is a political group in the European Parliament made up of Greens and representatives of stateless nations. It was born in July 1999 from the will of two progressive political families to co-operate in the European Parliament. Its project is: to build a society respectful of fundamental human rights and the environment, to increase freedom within the world of work, to deepen democracy by decentralization and direct participation of people in decision-making, to build a European Union of free peoples based on the principle of subsidiarity and to re-orientate the European Union towards social, cultural and ecological values.

www.greens-efa.org

Friends of the Earth is the largest grassroots environmental network in the world, campaigning to protect the environment and create sustainable societies. Friends of the Earth Europe (FoEE) unites more than 30 national member organisations with thousands of local groups. FoEE coordinates and supports the campaigns and projects of its member groups which deal with a large variety of subjects including food, farming and biotechnology; climate change, energy, eco-taxation and nuclear safety; globalisation, trade, corporate accountability and sustainable development; EU Accession; and regional programmes in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean.

www.foeeurope.org

EURO COOP is the European Association of Consumer Co-operatives. Founded in 1957, EURO COOP has its roots in the consumer co-operative movement launched in the mid-19th century across Europe. Today, it represents over 20 million consumer-members in 15 EU and accession countries. Created in order to protect the interests of their members, consumer co-operatives' aims include satisfying the needs and expectations of their members, while favouring a global approach towards production and distribution and taking into account environmental problems, consumer health and social responsibility. EURO COOP's priorities include working for sustainable consumption.

www.eurocoop.coop

The Heinrich Böll Foundation, The Heinrich Böll Foundation, affiliated with the Green Party and headquartered in the *Hackesche Höfe* in the heart of Berlin, is a legally independent political foundation working in the spirit of intellectual openness. The Foundation currently maintains foreign and project offices in the Arab Middle East, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, the Czech Republic, El Salvador, Georgia, India, Israel, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, the USA and an EU office in Brussels. New foreign offices in Mexico and Lebanon are currently being planned.

The Foundation's primary objective is to support political education both within Germany and abroad, thus promoting democratic involvement, sociopolitical activism, and cross-cultural understanding. The Foundation also provides support for art and culture, science and research, and developmental cooperation. Its activities are guided by the fundamental political values of ecology, democracy, solidarity, and non-violence. Heinrich Böll's call on citizens to meddle in politics is the example upon which the work of the Foundation is modeled.

www.boell.de



CONFERENCE **GMOs co-existence or contamination?** *Wednesday 28 May 2003, Brussels*

PROGRAMME

9:00 – 9:30 | WELCOME AND OPENING

Monica Frassoni, Co-President, Greens/EFA

Hiltrud Breyer, MEP, Greens/EFA

Geert Ritsema, GMO Campaign Coordinator, Friends of the Earth Europe

Dónal Walshe, Secretary General, Euro Coop

9:30 – 11:30 | SESSION 1

Co-existence: Ecological, agronomic and consumer aspects

Chair: Martin Rocholl, Director, Friends of the Earth Europe

Co-existence: regulatory approaches

Karin Scheele, MEP, PES

Co-existence and the farmed environment: a scientific overview

Brian Johnson, Head of Agricultural Technology Group, English Nature

Possible scenarios for co-existence in European agriculture

Jean Louis Cazaubon, President of the working group on organic agriculture,

COPA-COGECA (Committee of Agricultural Organisations in the European Union/ General Committee for Agricultural Cooperation in the European Union)

Co-existence: delivering consumer choice

Lise Christiansen, Consumer relations and environment Policier, Euro Coop

Co-existence and the consumers' freedom of choice

Jim Murray, Director, BEUC - The European Consumers' Organisation

Discussion

11:30 – 13:00 | SESSION 2

Co-existence: A challenge for the European Union?

Chair: Friedrich-Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf, MEP, Greens/EFA

Sustainable agriculture, diversity and co-existence

Jef Tavernier, Minister for Consumer Interests, Health and Environment (Belgium)

Co-existence and labelling of genetically modified food and feed
Oliver Drewes, Member of Cabinet, Commissioner Franz Fischler

Discussion

15:00 – 16:30 | SESSION 3

Round table: Co-existence - the way forward

Chair: Caroline Lucas, MEP, Greens/EFA

Jill Evans, MEP, Greens/EFA

Geert Ritsema, GMO Campaign Coordinator, Friends of the Earth Europe

Simon Barber, Director, EuropaBio

Benedikt Härlin, Head, Foundation for Future Farming/

SOS Save our Seeds

FOREWORD

The end of the EU moratorium on GMOs is possibly approaching as the European Union moves closer to adopting new Regulations on Traceability and Labelling of GMOs and on GM Food and Feed. Nevertheless, while the EU has spent a lot of time over the past few years regulating GMOs, many feel that there are still crucial gaps in the legal framework, notably with regard to co-existence of GM crops with conventional/organic agriculture, liability of GMO producers and seed purity. It was especially the issue of co-existence that has been at the forefront of the European debate in recent months as it became apparent to all stakeholders that non-GM farmers - and, in particular, organic producers - would be severely compromised if GM crops were grown on a large scale in the future without further protective measures.

With this in mind, the EU's Agriculture Commissioner issued a Communication in March 2003 recognising the problem but indicating that the Commission did not intend to propose legislation on co-existence. Following the release of the Communication, the Commission organised a "Round Table" on coexistence in April. This Round Table was not attended by most NGOs, who protested against the fact that the Commission had only invited industry representatives and no NGO speakers on the main panels.

With this highly charged background, a conference on "GMOs - co-existence or contamination?" took place at the European Parliament on Wednesday, 28th May 2003. The event was co-organised by two NGOs - Euro Coop and Friends of the Earth Europe, a political party - the Greens/European Free Alliance, and the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Open to all stakeholders, the conference attracted more than 200 participants from around Europe. The conference was attended by scientists, farmers- and consumers organisations, environmental NGOs, Members of the European Parliament, representatives from 8 different EU member states, representatives from the European Commission, the biotech industry and journalists. In the speeches and debates many different viewpoints were ventilated.



Partly as a result of the conference, the European Parliament adopted one month later, during its July session in Strasbourg, several amendments that give the EU member states the possibility to adopt coexistence legislation and to "take measures to avoid the unintended presence of GMOs in other products". Although a step in the right direction the move by the Parliament has not yet brought the solution to the coexistence problem. Instead of coordinated action on the EU level, the Brussels institutions so far seem to prefer to shift the "hot potato" to member states. Also the European Commission has not yet taken a proactive approach, but published in July 2003 non-binding 'Recommendations' for Member States on how to ensure coexistence between GMO, organic and conventional crops. By doing so the Commission has left the full responsibility for securing the future of GMO free food and farming in Europe to the member states, who have only limited (and probably insufficient) competence and means to achieve this goal.

It appears that there is still a long road ahead of us, before adequate legislation on the EU level will be established that guarantees consumers and farmers in Europe the right to eat and produce GMO free food.

Gill Lacroix

Les Amis de la Terre, France

Geert Ritsema

Friends of the Earth Europe

9 October 2003

OPENING SESSION

Monica Frassoni, MEP, Co-President of the Greens/European Free Alliance (EFA) chaired the opening session of the conference. In her introductory remarks, Frassoni reminded participants that the co-existence issue was at the heart of consumer choice because contamination by genetically modified organisms (GMOs) threatened freedom of choice.

The European Parliament had been attentive to the issue of co-existence since it was first raised. In 2000, during the second reading of the GMO Deliberate Release Directive, the Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy had already adopted an amendment addressing the issue of co-existence. That amendment, however, was unfortunately not adopted by the Plenary.

Frassoni pointed out that the aim of the conference was to debate possible technical and, in particular, regulatory approaches to address the problem of co-existence. EU Agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler's Communication on "Co-existence of genetically modified, conventional and organic crops" considered mainly two options regarding how the issue of GMO contamination might be addressed: by 'soft' law measures at Member State level (option 1), or by Community legislation (option 2). The Commission's Communication concluded "that an approach based on subsidiarity appears to be most suitable", meaning that individual Member States would be able to create appropriate measures. In Frassoni's view, that statement raised the question of whether Member States were – under current Community law - in a position to impose certain restrictions on the cultivation and use of GMOs in order to ensure that co-existence is possible.



From left to right: Martin Rocholl, FoEE, Dónal Walshe, EURO COOP, Monica Frassoni, MEP, Geert Ritsema, FoEE and Hiltrud Breyer, MEP.

Frassoni stressed that the coming weeks would be very crucial for the development of an EU co-existence scheme. During the July Plenary session, the European Parliament would vote in second reading on amendments - some of which deal specifically with the co-existence issue - to the future EU Regulations on (1) Traceability/ Labelling of GMOs and Food/Feed produced from GMOs (COM(2001) 182 final), and (2) GM Food/Feed (COM(2001) 425 final). Furthermore, Fischler's cabinet had announced that the Commission would publish guidelines on co-existence before summer break, i.e. by end-July.

Hiltrud Breyer, MEP, Greens/EFA, pointed out that the European Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy had recently adopted some amendments on co-existence that could be the starting point for new legislation (amendments adopted during the Committee's second reading of the two Regulations referred to above).

However, more legislation on co-existence was needed because the supply of GM-free food could not be ensured without first solving the co-existence problem.

Unless adequate measures were taken to guarantee co-existence, consumers' freedom of choice, as well as the future of conventional and organic farmers, would be under threat.

In Breyer's view, the Commission's Communication on co-existence seemed to indicate that it was the person who had been "polluted" who had to bear the costs of any damage, which is contradictory to the principle of 'the polluter pays'.

It was important to address the problem of co-existence now because of the imminent threat to both organic and conventional agriculture, and to consumers' freedom of choice.

Geert Ritsema, GMO Campaign Co-ordinator, Friends of the Earth Europe, welcomed the participants, remarked on the huge interest that the conference had generated and highlighted the diversity of participants attending this conference. The conference was taking place at a crucial time, he said, since the co-existence issue was at the heart of the political debate surrounding GMOs in the European Union.

Ritsema pointed out that dealing with the problem of co-existence between GMOs and conventional/organic farming, and the issue of GMO contamination, was vital in order to ensure free choice both for farmers and consumers.

The EP's Committee Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy had adopted last week several amendments that called for additional legislation to prevent GMOs in food and feed (future EU Regulations on Traceability/Labelling of GMOs and GM Food/Feed). Ritsema called on the Plenary of Parliament to support these amendments during the forthcoming vote in Strasbourg in early July. He remarked that without guarantees for future sufficient supplies of GM-free food and feed, labelling would become meaningless.

The Communication on co-existence published by Commissioner Fischler in March 2003 made it clear that the European Commission was aware of the need for additional measures to ensure GM-free food. Major difficulties still had to be resolved. In the view of a majority of EU Member States and the Environment Committee of the Parliament, the European Union had to make legally binding rules, whereas the Commission so far had only talked about 'voluntary guidelines'.

As far as Friends of the Earth was concerned, Ritsema said that the main question to be debated during the conference was: Will the right to eat and produce GM-free food be a legal right or not? Another problem that remained unresolved was: Who is going to pay for the cost of measures to ensure co-existence?

Dónal Walshe, Secretary General, EURO COOP spoke on behalf of one of the longest-established European consumer organisations. He said that EURO COOP was proud to be co-organiser of the conference, together with the Greens/EFA, Friends of the Earth and the Heinrich Böll Foundation. He welcomed the presence of all the different players in the food chain since EURO COOP believed that all stakeholders must work together in order to find feasible solutions for the future if the GMO moratorium in Europe were lifted.

Walshe remarked that co-existence and contamination were closely related to many other issues such as GM labelling, the question of consumer and farmer choice, agriculture costs, and liability. He pointed out that the debate had recently become more controversial as a result of the complaint recently filed by the US against the European Union in the WTO.

According to Walshe, it was clear that consumers wanted to have the opportunity to choose what they eat and in order to protect consumer choice, binding measures were required before the EU moratorium was lifted. He called on those present to keep this fundamental consumer right in mind during the debates.

SESSION ONE

Co-existence: Ecological, agronomic and consumer aspects

Chair: Martin Rocholl, *Director, Friends of the Earth Europe*

Co-existence: regulatory approaches

Karin Scheele, MEP (PES, Austria), Rapporteur for the Regulation on Genetically Modified Food and Feed.

Scheele told participants that the European Parliament was currently working on the second reading of the two proposals for Regulations on GM Food/Feed and Traceability/Labeling. She said that the Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy had recently debated the proposals and had voted in favour of some amendments on the co-existence issue. These new amendments had been adopted with the co-operation of several different political parties. The Plenary vote in second reading, however, required a positive majority of the total number of MEPs (rather than the total of MEPs present at the Strasbourg Plenary), i.e. 314 out of a total 625 MEPs, and it was not easy to gain such a majority.

Scheele pointed out that her political group, the Party of European Socialists, believed that co-existence of different types of agriculture was a first step towards ensuring consumer choice, and that other issues under discussion, such as labelling, were very closely linked to co-existence.

During the first reading in the EP of the proposed future Regulations, co-existence was already part of the debate but was not at the centre of the battle. The main debate had been about the labelling of all products containing or produced from GMOs. Parliament had voted in favour of labelling of GMOs in accordance with the principle of traceability. In the second reading by the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy, MEPs adopted an amendment allowing a contamination threshold of 0.5% for the adventitious presence of authorised GMOs, whereas the Council's common position was for a 0.9% threshold. Today's debate on co-existence has become very crucial in relation to the question of contamination thresholds, said Scheele.

The European Commission's position was in favour of decentralisation on co-existence but Scheele said she believed that this was contradictory to current legislation regarding authorisation for deliberate release of GMOs which was centralised at EU level. In Scheele's view, it was unjust to have a centralised procedure for authorisation but to let the Member States deal with problems that result from authorisation. Furthermore, national legislation could be contradictory to the principles of the single market.

Co-existence and the farmed environment: a scientific overview

Brian Johnson, *Head of Agricultural Technology Group, English Nature*

Dr. Johnson analysed the impacts of GMOs on the environment and looked at some of the key biological and agricultural factors that needed to be taken into account to develop a co-existence policy. These included knowledge about gene flow between crops and wild relatives, the realities of segregating crops in farming areas, and the importance of understanding how seed supply was managed, especially at farm level.



Brian Johnson, *Head of Agricultural Technology Group, English Nature*

■ *Gene flow:*

Johnson made a distinction between (1) some crops that had low gene flow between fields (inter-crop) and none to wild plants in Europe: cereals including wheat, maize, sunflowers, peas and beans, potatoes, and (2) others that had moderate inter-crop gene flow and exchange genes with some wild relatives: oilseed rape, beet, grasses and clovers. He noted that the gene flow between varieties of a crop was, to some extent, predictable but there were additional factors such as wind that could produce surprises.

■ *Segregation:*

Johnson remarked that the separation distances between crops that had low inter-crop gene flow and with wild relatives might deliver acceptable thresholds in food, but that targets for separation distance between such crops were unlikely to be achieved because of the realities of farming and farmers. Therefore, strict segregation of harvested crops and seed supplies (including farm-saved seed) would be required in order to achieve acceptable thresholds.

His evaluation was that voluntary codes of practice for agriculture did not work. He pointed out that there had been many codes of practice dealing with management of agriculture in the last 30 years and most had failed to deliver acceptable results. In his opinion, good management of agricultural resources did not work without legislation. If we require co-existence, we may need an EU Co-existence Directive or at least national legislation to be able to ensure that GM crops and GM-free crops were separated where this is feasible.

■ *Seeds:*

Johnson stressed that seeds spilt at harvest could persist in the soil for many years, in fields, margins and roadsides. Spilt seed produced 'volunteers' plants - for instance up to 5% of oilseed rape crop plants were from the soil seed bank. Unless detailed crop records were kept, spilt GM seed from previous harvests could affect transgenic content, both directly and via crossing with sown plants. That would have a direct effect on thresholds.

In 2001, the EU's Scientific Committee on Plants issued an Opinion on "The adventitious presence of GM seeds in conventional seeds" which stated that thresholds up to 0.7% of GMOs could be tolerated for some crops such as soya and field peas. Even at the lower threshold levels of 0.3% recommended by the SCP for cross-pollinating varieties such as oilseed rape, there were additional effects on seed due to cross pollination and seed split from previous harvests.

According to Johnson, ensuring co-existence in the future would require adhering to the following rules:

- Commercially produced seed supplies could be kept separate by seed production in separate regions but this would be very difficult to achieve with farm-saved seed.
- Seed purity would need much more testing - the PCR method was expensive and often gave false positives that need re-testing.
- Genetic isolation mechanisms could be useful but they were not yet available and research showed they were "leaky" if used alone. Combinations of these traits may eventually prove successful.

Johnson pointed out that the Commission's proposals for presence of GMOs in conventional seed were derived from calculations based on arbitrary thresholds in food (0.3% in oilseed rape; 0.5% in maize, beet, potatoes, tomatoes, cotton; 0.7% in soya). He underlined that the level of detection was below 0.1% if bulk seed was tested. In his opinion, the proposals failed to take into consideration the potential impacts on environment and agronomy. Moreover, they also failed to give definitions of composition of transgenic component (other than it should be authorised) and did not address the issue of adventitious transgenic components in GM crops.

Example: Potential impacts of 0.3% transgenic adventitious presence in oilseed rape

- approximately 100 oilseed rape plants per m²
- average field is 10 ha = 10 5 m²
- number of plants/field = 10 7
- number of transgenic/field = 3X 10 4

So up to 30,000 transgenic plants per field will be exchanging genes with their neighbours and possibly also with wild relatives such as Brassica rapa.

Whether the presence of transgenic plants in 'conventional' fields had potentially adverse impacts depended on the crop, the trait and whether we consider food supply, the environment or the impact on farming, Johnson said. How could the conventional (non-GM) farmer know what was in his field? Under the current proposals, Johnson considered that risks in a long-term scenario were:

- 1 Lack of guarantee that transgenic components would be authorised, especially in imported seed.
- 2 Transgenic components in conventional seed could be composed of multiple transformations in future.
- 3 Adventitious presence meant gene stacking was inevitable - that could lead to volunteer plants with multiple herbicide tolerance, and insect and disease resistance.
- 4 The impacts on fitness of volunteers and weedy crop relatives (such as weed beet and wild turnip) were not known because there was not enough scientific knowledge available.

5 Farmers would need to control GM volunteers very rigorously, including in biodiversity-rich field margins. That had implications for damage to wildlife and would not fit well with agri-environment schemes.

Another consideration, said Johnson, was that, for example, in the UK approximately 40% of seeds were farm-saved and there was a thriving industry for cleaning and packaging farm saved seed. The adventitious presence of transgenics could put this industry in danger and those involved were very concerned about the legality of farm-saved seed if it contained a proportion of patented genetic material.

Summing up, Johnson said that commercialisation of the current generation of GM crops could have the following impacts on farmers which should be taken into account:

- The presence of GM crops in conventional seed with the proposed thresholds and transgenic volunteers would probably increase farmers' costs.
- Testing for the presence of GMOs was very expensive and farmers could not pay for it.
- It was unclear how we could solve the question of the legality of farmers inadvertently sowing patented transgenic seed.
- It would be very difficult for some organic businesses to survive if organic standards remain unchanged.

In his view, ensuring co-existence would be expensive because of the extra costs of farm and seed management. The question was: Who was going to pay for it, and what were the benefits of co-existence?

Discussion

Ioannis Kassimeris, Grayling Political Strategy, considered that, on the issue of legislation, it was necessary to have better regulation rather than more regulation, and asked Ms Scheele if it was possible to use alternative forms of regulation in order to create legislation on co-existence.

Simon Barber, Europabio, remarked that novel herbicide-tolerant traits had already been used in other new, non-GM technologies. He asked if Dr Johnson expected many differences using GM crops.

Benedikt Härlin, the Foundation on Future Farming / SOS Save our Seeds, asked for confirmation that the detection level for GM contamination is 0.1%.

Micha Kuiper, Dutch Platform on Gene-technology, said he had understood that GM plants and movement of genes would be a problem for co-existence, and asked about the situation for plants with low gene flow.

Panel Response

For Karin Scheele the problem for the European Parliament was that it did not have the right to initiate legislation. It could ask (the European Commission) for it but could not originate necessary legislation itself.

Brian Johnson said that experience of herbicide-tolerance so far was that many plant varieties became more tolerant to some herbicides through conventional breeding. Overall, that meant that herbicides became more effective because plants were more tolerant to them, but weeds developed resistance. With genetic modification, plants became very resistant to more powerful herbicides such as glyphosate. That could have implications for reduction of weed populations, not just within fields but also in field margins to the point where weeds could be completely absent. He noted that farmland biodiversity depends on weed seeds and insects living on weeds and reminded participants that, in Europe, huge reductions in the numbers of birds and plants that were associated with European agriculture have been observed, caused partly by over-efficient weed control.

Johnson said it was difficult to give a clear example of how to determine the lowest detection level for GMOs, but 0.1% was generally agreed to be reliable lower limit. He noted that pollen transfer was not the only issue for plants with low gene flow. However, the problem with even those plants was how to provide a separation barrier between the different forms of agriculture, because you need strict control over separated seed and harvest, processing and supply of seed. Therefore effective measures need to be put in place, not just codes of practice.

Possible scenarios for co-existence in European agriculture

Jean-Louis Cazaubon, *President of the Working Group on Organic Agriculture, COPA-COGECA.*

Cazaubon pointed out that COPA-COGECA unites more than 40 farmers' unions in the 15 European Union Member States. He said that it was very timely and necessary to have a discussion with all the different players who were attending the conference - scientists, consumers, environmental organisations and food producers.

Cazaubon considered that we were faced with a very complex choice because it was a choice of society linked to the refusal to authorise GMOs in the European Union. The authorisation of GMOs could mean that conventional agriculture - and the official labels of quality - as well as organic agriculture could be in danger. In order to guarantee the future for both GMOs and conventional/organic agriculture in the European Union, the necessary legislation and resources to make both kinds of agriculture possible in Europe would be required.

COPA-COGECA was calling for co-existence to be possible, with some conditions, he said:

- Respect for the principles of food security, consumer choice and environmental protection.
- Authorisation for GMOs in Europe based on strict and permanent scientific assessment in line with the Precautionary Principle.
- A clear labelling system that ensured the whole food chain - from farmer to consumer - is well informed about GMOs.

- Regulation of GMOs at European level should also cover imported products, in particular processed food products derived from GMOs.

He considered that it was necessary to establish thresholds for contamination and adventitious presence, as well as to determine who was responsible in case of contamination and what measures should be put in place to avoid contamination.

■ **Thresholds:**

The EU's Scientific Committee on Plants considered the spread of GMOs as unavoidable with a high risk of contamination of GM-free crops. That meant that realistic thresholds were needed. On the one hand, some organic farmers called for thresholds of 0% whereas, on the other, some co-operatives quoted higher thresholds between 3 and 5%. Cazaubon said that COPA-COGECA backed the establishment of thresholds for adventitious presence of GMOs that would facilitate the co-existence of both types of agriculture, transgenic crops and conventional/organic crops.

■ **Liability:**

In view of the current lack of legislation in this area, farmers were bearing the cost for GMO contamination of their fields, or during transport and storage. Thus the co-existence issue raised the question of responsibility when there was contamination. It was necessary, said Cazaubon, to define the responsibility of the different players in order to facilitate the implementation of co-existence. He considered that biotech industry had to accept responsibility for damage that commercialisation of GMOs might cause. In

the context of both civil and environmental responsibility, an international and European framework had to be put in place in order to provide a comprehensive and workable solution.

Cazaubon called for a compensation fund to be set up for farmers in case of adventitious GMO contamination. He believed that the authorities who authorised GMOs to be commercialised in the first place were responsible for damage caused by GMOs. But he was against farmers having to fund a compensation system.

■ **Avoiding contamination:**

In Cazaubon's view, the European Union institutions had to define general rules concerning cultivation, segregation, labelling, during the whole process of a product, and measures to avoid adventitious contamination. He believed that seed companies had to be able to notify those rules to farmers and he considered that the management of those measures was only a part of wider measures that would be required throughout the whole production chain. Rules had to be put in place to preserve conventional and organic agriculture without increasing costs for farmers. In this regard, it might be appropriate to create voluntary GMO zones and GMO-free zones where there was consensus among farmers.

Finally, Cazaubon asked the European Union to deal with the question of GMOs in the international context. For example, the approach to sampling and product testing should be harmonised.

Co-existence: delivering consumer choice

Lise Christiansen, *Consumer Relations and Environment Policy Officer, EURO COOP.*

Christiansen explained that EURO COOP is the European Association of Consumer Co-operatives with 45 years' experience representing consumers. It represents consumer co-operatives and their 20million consumer-members across 14 european countries. EURO COOP's member organisations together operate 60,000 consumer co-operative outlets and employ more than 300,000 people. GMO traceability and labelling was one of EURO COOP's top priorities.



Lise Christiansen, *EURO COOP.*

Christiansen believed it was necessary to maintain the link between agriculture practices, environmental protection and consumer choice. She pointed that before the EU resumes authorisations of GM crops in Europe, it is imperative to put co-existence measures in place. Those co-existence measures had to include traceability, implementation of 'the polluter pays' principle, and liability.

She noted that consumers believe they have the right to choose, according to a recent Euro-Barometer survey. She believed that the right of consumers to

make informed choices about the food they eat was the starting point of the debate on co-existence.

The consumer co-operatives welcomed the Commission's proposal on traceability and the recent European Parliament votes to strengthen GMO traceability. EU measures should also ensure the development of GMO-free farming, both organic and non-organic. Christiansen welcomed Commissioner Fischler's recent proposals on co-existence but found them rather weak. She called for an EU-wide framework and believed that legally binding rules on co-existence should resolve liability by providing stronger defence against contamination. They should also serve to raise standards.

Christiansen pointed out that seed purity was crucial to avoiding contamination later in the food chain and that adventitious contamination had to stay as low as possible. She noted the discrimination in the present situation where conventional and organic farmers had to comply with strict rules in order to avoid GM contamination while GMO growers did not suffer any negative consequences from conventional or organic 'contamination'.

She considered that inspections were an important tool in ensuring compliance and pointed out that they had to be carried out by public or fully independent agencies.

The Commission's proposals implied that cost of contamination was shared by all the players involved and that was in contradiction with 'the polluter pays' principle, she said. Instead she called for 'the polluter pays' principle to be upheld and for mandatory insurance schemes to compensate farmers whose crops had been contaminated, with insurance backed-up by contingency funds.

Concerning the liability issue, Christiansen supported an EU liability scheme that would protect conventional and organic farms from contamination, and considered that the proposed Directive on Environmental Liability was an opportunity to cover damage caused by GMOs.

She believed that co-existence did not necessarily mean contamination if the EU put co-existence measures in place before allowing any resumption of GM crop authorisations in Europe. Consumers' right to choose would only be safeguarded if detailed, consistent co-existence rules were put in place across Europe, she said.

Co-existence and consumers' freedom of choice

Jim Murray, *Director, BEUC - The European Consumers' Organisation.*

Murray is also currently Chair of the Trans-Atlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD). He noted that consumers' organisations in the US were supporting the European approach to GMOs and that they very strongly opposed the American initiative to file a complaint against the EU in the WTO.

Murray noted that the principle of consumer choice had been accepted in Europe and BEUC was working to execute this key point in practice. On the question of thresholds, he believed that these were inevitable. However, as far as seeds were concerned, these thresholds should be zero. Whether or not that was attainable was currently being researched by BEUC. One of the potential problems was that some people's livelihood might be wiped out by the slightest contamination, so the idea of zero-tolerance for seeds might be too difficult to achieve in practice.

He strongly agreed that it was necessary to have EU-wide legislation on co-existence and that the problem could not be dealt with on the basis of subsidiarity. The Member States were not in position to regulate whatever they wanted. No state could declare itself a GM-zone or a GM-free zone under the current Directive. He also believed that the European Parliament should have co-decision powers on agricultural issues. Only a few EU Member States were blocking these procedures.

Another question was how to propose better agricultural practices in relation to co-existence. He considered that regulation on GM practices would be rather contrary to current regulation for organic farming because the aims were opposite. The idea of registration of isolation distances between GM and non-GM crops would be a good measure, and he also agreed with the creation of GMO-free zones.

On the question of liability, Murray remarked that anybody who wanted to grow and was authorised to grow GM plants had to be prepared to accept responsibility. He noted that in a Public Statement published by the TAED, there was some information that showed that the US was not carrying out environmental impact assessments of GM products. Instead, they accepted the safety assessments sent to them by the company which as seeking authorisation. There was therefore no independent assessment at all.

Murray believed that co-existence was a key principle if the introduction of particular GMOs appeared to be a real threat to organic agriculture. At the end of the day, he said, the key principle of consumers' organisations was the right of consumers to free choice.

Discussion

Gerard Choplin, *Coordination Paysanne Européenne/European Farmers Co-ordination*, said that farmers and consumers did not need GMOs and - according to results of recent opinion surveys - they did not want GMOs. In his view, genetic manipulation was a regression in the progress of humanity. Co-existence was not possible and he found the debate on co-existence surrealist because nobody wanted GMOs - with the exception of the biotech industry and perhaps the European Union.

Iris Strutzmann, *Global 2000 Austria*, pointed out that Mr. Cazaubon had said COPA-COGECA did not agree with the creation of a compensation system funded by farmers. In that case, she asked, who is going to pay in case of contamination?

Micha Kuiper, *Dutch Platform on Gene-technology*, asked the consumer organisations what was the meaning of liability scheme - to provide financial compensation and/or to also prevent problems?

Lawrence Woodward, *Elm Farm Research Centre*, asked the consumers organisations if they were calling for regulation on GM crops, i.e. legal standards, registration, licensing of land, inspection systems, etc.?

Benedikt Härlin, *the Foundation for Future Farming / SOS Save our Seeds*, asked COPA-COGECA if a threshold of 0.3% to 0.7% for the adventitious presence of GMOs in seeds is realistic. He pointed out that Brian Johnson had already said that this could have a big impact on the environment.

Brian Johnson, *English Nature*, remarked that the US needed to realise that European consumers were not just concerned about the quality of their food but they were also concerned about methods of food production and the impact on the environment. The US had to realise that the relationship between farming and the environment in Europe was quite different to the situation in America. In Europe, 70% of the land area was farmed and, besides producing food, the area contained a substantial proportion of our wildlife.

Martin Rocholl, *Friends of the Earth Europe*, said the question was: How to guarantee segregation in order to make co-existence possible?

Panel Response

Jim Murray considered that the cost of controlling contamination should be borne by those who were benefiting from the introduction of new technology. That should apply not only to seed producers but also to farmers and everyone else who wanted to use the new technology. That would not be easy to achieve in practice, however, he said.

Jean-Louis Cazaubon considered that the cultivation of GM crops would depend on consumers. In his view, it was clear that both GM products and GM-free products had a place in the market. However, most consumers did not want to eat GM food at the moment. According to Cazaubon, the threshold for the presence of GMOs in seed should be as low as possible. There were no agreements on this so far but he believed that one should try to get as close to zero as possible.

Lise Christiansen considered that GM production should have the same kind of regulation as organic production. She considered that there needed to be further discussion on using liability as a way to prevent contamination and resolve problems that would arise in future.

Brian Johnson pointed out that while for some crops, the practicalities of segregation are possible, for other crops - especially those with high out-crossing rates - it was very much more difficult. You could not therefore make any general rules about segregation and it had to be dealt with on a crop-by-crop basis.

He noted that the introduction of new technology did not necessarily result in increased costs. New technologies have often produced high benefits for society as a whole and the risk had to be borne by everyone in society, especially when social benefits were not economically viable to begin with. He pointed out that there were many pertinent examples, for example recent alternative technologies for renewable energy production.

Johnson said that with GM technology we had to be very careful to define liability. It was perfectly possible that we would see transgenic plants that were highly beneficial to the whole of society. However, it was also equally possible that some GM crops would not be beneficial. In this respect, he did not believe the claims made for some genetic transformations by some biotech companies because there was often no scientific evidence to support those claims.

Karin Scheele agreed that, in an economic system, we had to consider the choices of both consumer and producer. She pointed out that she was fighting to defend the principle of 'the polluter pays' and said she would follow what came out of the future Directive on Environmental Liability. According to the Communication by Agricultural Commissioner Fischler, the one "who gains advantage" pays and that would be interpreted as if it were organic farmers who were going to pay.



From left to right: Martin Rocholl, FoEE, Karin Scheele, MEP, Brian Johnson, English Nature, Jean-Louis Cazaubon, COPA-COGECA, Lise Christiansen, EURO COOP and Jim Murray, BEUC.

SESSION TWO

Co-existence: A challenge for the European Union

Chair: Friedrich-Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf, *MEP, Greens/EFA*

Sustainable agriculture, diversity and co-existence

Jef Tavernier, Minister for Consumer Interests, Health and Environment, Belgium.

Tavernier pointed that the new EU legislation (Directive 2001/18, the new Regulations on Food / Feed and on Traceability / Labelling) was the starting point for a more restrictive policy to GMOs in Europe. Co-existence legislation therefore would be considered as the 'last brick of the building'.

He remarked that Fischler's Communication presented the debate on co-existence as only an economic problem which was, in his view, a one-sided approach and neglected certain crucial principles in European GMO legislation:

- 'the Precautionary Principle' - Article 19 of the GMO deliberate release Directive 2001/18 provided the opportunity for certain areas (such as nature reserves) to be free of GMOs;
- freedom of choice - this principle was at the heart of the problem in the discussion about the management of co-existence.

In his view, just having a label on a product was not enough to ensure real freedom of choice. Traceability meant GMO-free producers had to prove that they were GMO-free. That did not uphold the principle of 'the polluter pays'. On the contrary, this approach was a disadvantage for conventional and organic producers because they had to bear the costs of preventing contamination. It would be easier to cultivate GMOs than to grow conventional or organic crops.

The European Commission intended to regulate co-existence through voluntary agreements and general guidelines. Tavernier remarked that, in the EU Agriculture Council, Belgium had already called for a binding legal framework. Other Member States such as Portugal and Austria had already adopted some rules at national level. He stressed that freedom of choice for consumers and for organic agriculture could disappear if we did not fight for a binding legal framework throughout the EU.

Tavernier pointed out that countries within the European Union had previously indicated an intention to have as much as 10% of agricultural land under organic production by 2010. Binding legal rules were required in order to avoid GMO contamination of organic crops.

He remarked that Article 22 of the GMO deliberate release Directive 2001/18 stated it was not possible for Member States to take unilateral measures concerning GMOs. That meant that countries were not able either to set up GM-free zones, or introduce more restrictive national rules than those foreseen under EU legislation.

Although the European Commission wanted to issue guidelines in order to allow Member States to develop their own systems for co-existence, current legislation actually prevents Member States from taking concrete measures. In Tavernier's view, this contradictory situation should be resolved by building into EU legislation the right for Member States to impose additional conditions and restrictions in order to protect existing agriculture systems, and to prevent contamination. A new EU Directive was therefore required in order to protect agriculture and prevent contamination. Alternatively, the other solution was comprehensive EU legislation that would be implemented at national level in all the Member States. Tavernier favours the second option.

Tavernier commented that the Joint Research Centre - an official agency of the European Union - had already demonstrated in a report issued during 2002 that co-existence would become very expensive. We should therefore study carefully what co-existence would mean in terms of additional costs.

He believed that making policy was a question of creating choice. The Commission, the European Parliament and the Council had been working for years to have stricter and more transparent legislation on GMOs. He believed that a high level of vigilance was required when developing this legislation and that the responsibility lay with those who shape the future legislation whether it would really ensure true freedom of choice.

Co-existence and labelling of genetically modified food and feed

Oliver Drewes, *Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Franz Fischler.*

Drewes presented what the Commission was currently working on with regard to the co-existence issue. He pointed out that there was no doubt as far as the Commission was concerned that the cultivation of GMOs in Europe would have some implications for agricultural products.

In Drewes' opinion, the first question to consider when discussing co-existence was that of farmer choice. In principle, the Commission would like every farmer to be able to cultivate the kind of crop he or she chooses. In addition, the co-existence issue is linked to consumer choice, i.e. the right to choose between GM and GM-free crops. He noted that only authorised GMOs would be allowed to be grown in Europe, and stressed that all the aspects relating to health and environment concerns had already been addressed during the authorisation procedure. He considered therefore that only the economic aspects related to cultivation of GMOs remained to be addressed, which was linked to the question of which additional measures would be necessary in order to ensure co-existence of both kinds of agriculture.

Drewes believed that before implementing any measures for co-existence, it was important to know what impacts of co-existence would be. The Commission had organised a Round Table on 24th April 2003 at which the latest scientific findings on co-existence had been discussed, as well as some practical agronomic experience. Discussions had focused on GM maize and oilseed rape, both of which had already been authorised to use in Europe.

He considered that key findings on co-existence were:

- Co-existence had to be addressed on a case-by-case, crop specific basis because contamination would depend on biological characteristics and agricultural practices.
- Co-existence was manageable if proper agricultural measures were taken; co-existence was not a new issue in farming and the agricultural sector had substantial experience with it. Field studies like those carried out in the UK were necessary to find out more about co-existence of organic, conventional and GM crops.
- The necessary measures and the costs associated with them were closely linked to the question of threshold levels. He noted that the lower the level of the threshold, the higher the cost of achieving it. Agriculture was an open process and a 0% threshold was not feasible in practice.
- There were no general measures for co-existence. Any approach on co-existence had to take into account vast differences in farm structures, crop varieties and climatic conditions.

Member States should play a very important role and should take very active initiatives in developing and implementing measures for co-existence, in line with national, regional and even local requisites. The Commission was going to support that process and accordingly it would publish an orientation text that supported the development of national, regional or local strategies to address co-existence. The Commission's assessment would be based on sound science while, at the same time, developing an appropriate legal framework able to cope and deal with the issue. Any legal text should be developed in a transparent process with the full participation of all the stakeholders, while safeguarding the principle of free choice for both producers and consumers. It was foreseen that the Commission would publish its text on the co-existence of organic, conventional and GM crops before the summer.



Discussion

Thomas Dosch, Bioland e.V, considered that organic farming worked with a lot of measures in order to produce food that is organic and that consumer could trust. It was very important to safeguard organic agriculture which would be under threat. It was therefore necessary to foresee legislation addressing contamination by and liability of GM producers

Liliane Spendeler, Amigos de la Tierra España, asked whether some Member States had already anticipated measures to keep the moratorium until there was legislation on liability and co-existence.

Fabrizia Pratesi, Equivita Scientific Committee, asked why have a debate on co-existence rather than a debate about benefits of GMOs? In her view, co-existence was not feasible and she thought that the biotech industry had

not yet convinced anyone of the benefits of co-existence. She called for the EU Directive on Patents to be repealed. The real danger with GMOs was that companies used them to privatise the genetic resources of the planet.

Lawrence Woodward, Elm Farm Research Centre, considered that the Commission was very far from the understanding the views of different stakeholders. He noted that Mr Drewes' statement was completely out of touch with anything that had previously been said in the room. He did not agree that the Round Table organised by the Commission was a real stakeholders' round table.

Sabine Riewenherm, Grüne Bundestagsfraktion, pointed out that the German government had published a report which included some points raised in the discussion, such as the necessity for harmonised regulation of GMOs and the liability issue. She asked how the Commission was going to deal with both points.

Werner Mueller, Global 2000, pointed out that, in Austria, there was a regulation for thresholds of 0% that worked very well. He considered that we had to look at what was necessary rather than what was possible because we were discussing a long-term approach. He noted that if we start with a threshold of 0.5%, we need to be aware of what could happen 20 years later.

Dónal Walshe, EURO COOP, one of the co-organisers of the Conference, thanked the Commission for attending. He pointed-out however that as far as he was aware, no consumer organisations had attended the Commission's Round Table. Therefore, the current conference was the first one where the entire production chain and the Commission had been present. He told the Commission that for EURO COOP, the starting point of the debate was consumer choice. EURO COOP believed that this could only be guaranteed if the EU enacts binding rules; without strict EU guidelines, there would be contamination. All it would take would be a Member State without the motivation or resources to properly implement the Guidelines. For EURO COOP therefore, clear, binding rules at EU-level were needed before the moratorium is lifted. How exactly, he asked, would the Commission Guidelines ensure that there would not be contamination?

Li Ching LIM, Third World Network, questioned Mr Drewes about his definition of 'sound science'.

Micha Kuiper, Dutch Platform on Gene-technology, noted that 70% of European consumers did not want to eat GM food. He considered that a 0.9% threshold for adventitious contamination was very high and did not respect consumers' wishes.

Panel Response

Jef Tavernier considered that it was not reasonable to ban GMOs and that was a dogmatic position. He stressed that a clear legal framework was needed, taking into consideration also the international legal framework on GMOs, i.e. the Biosafety Protocol. Tavernier agreed that the responsibility should lie with those who wanted to take the risk and noted that there were different positions in Europe relating to liability. He remarked that the moratorium would be lifted when the Member States considered the time was right.

Oliver Drewes responded that the Commission needed the input of stakeholders in order to publish a Proposal that was in touch with what needed to be done. He pointed out that the Commission's Round Table in April was a meeting of scientists in which all people who were interested could participate. All the information about the Round Table had been posted on the Internet. Drewes asked the conference participants to highlight other important aspects that should be taken in consideration in preparing the Proposal. He pointed out that one could organise GM-free zones without undermining the legal framework, for example in the context of voluntary agreements.

At the last Council of EU Agriculture Ministers, Drewes said there had been a discussion on co-existence. The discussion was very constructive with examples and suggestions for a future legal framework. In reply to the question about the report in Germany, Drewes said that Renate Künast (the German minister) had played a very constructive role in the Council debate, which was very much welcomed by the Commission.

Drewes agreed that there were political decisions to be made regarding co-existence and that it was not just a question of science. The co-existence issue was about consumer and producer choice. In response to the question about the definition of 'sound science', he noted that, whatever the context, scientists always have to work within a set of given parameters. He considered the argument whether consumers wanted GMOs or not as irrelevant insofar as the need for a legal framework is concerned, because the legal framework which should be developed needs to ensure that co-existence would work even if only 2% of consumers were buying organic food. He agreed that a framework needed to be developed for the long term. Regarding the 'polluter pays' principle, he noted that there were legal procedures to assure that the polluter did pay. Liability was based on the 'polluter pays' principle and depended on a case-by-case situation.

SESSION THREE

Round table: Co-existence –the way forward

Chair: Caroline Lucas, *MEP, Greens/EFA*

Benedikt Härlin, Head of Foundation for Future Farming / SOS Save our Seeds, explained that he was a member of the European Parliament in 1989 when the vote on the first Directive on the deliberate release of GMOs took place. The motion for a five-year moratorium was lost by just one vote in the Plenary. He was therefore very happy 9 years later when the Council decided to impose a moratorium. Current events were once again very important to the debate on GMOs in Europe.

Härlin said he believed that the terms of co-existence were actually the beginning of reality for GMOs in Europe. We were no longer dealing with hypothetical issues but with the actual release of GMOs in Europe.

He considered that the Traceability/Labelling Regulation was an important victory for European consumers. Under existing food regulations, 80% of the GMOs currently imported into the EU did not have to be labelled. Soon, however, everything except animal products from animals fed on GMOs would have to be labelled, so the new Regulation represented progress.

He pointed out that there are, nevertheless, key points missing in current legislation:

- **Seed purity:**

It was very important that we obtained a threshold of 0.1% in order to preserve GMO-free production in the future because thresholds would have major implications for agricultural practice.

- **Liability:**

In the current situation a farmer who was contaminated by GMOs had to prove that the GM genes had come from the neighbouring farmers, i.e. he had to pay a lawyer and he might manage to get some compensation at the end of the process. In Härlin's view, it was the owner of the GMO authorisation who should compensate the farmer and the companies concerned should inform farmers about the measures that they had to take in order to prevent contamination.

- **Co-existence:**

Härlin considered that a comprehensive legal framework was required instead of a case-by-case approach. He pointed out that there was also a need for regulation that clearly specifies the obligations and rights of farmers who want to choose to grow GMOs in the future. Co-existence was not an economic issue as the European Commission had claimed. It was also a question of environment but the revised deliberate release Directive 2001/10 did not deal with it. Co-existence meant that two different lines of products would be available. The Commission had failed to say who was going to pay for segregation within the whole product chain.

According to Härlin, the European Commission lacked the necessary will to solve the co-existence problem. He called on participants to be on their guard during the coming weeks if they wanted to ensure the future of agriculture and food without GMOs.

Jill Evans, MEP, Greens/EFA, explained that the National Assembly of Wales had tried to make the country GMO-free but had been undermined rather than supported by the European Commission. In 2001, the National Assembly - which is the regional elected body in Wales - took action to restrict the use of a type of GM maize that had already been approved for market release in 1998. In July 2001, the UK government presented the case to the Commission which replied that the measures taken by Wales were neither justified nor legally sustainable. The Commission argued that Directive 2001/18 did not apply in that case because the Assembly wanted to deal with issues such as co-existence and separation distances. The UK government was therefore advised to reconsider the issue and ensure the restrictions were lifted.

Evans believed that this reflected the current situation very well, i.e. the fact there are various Regulations and Directives on GMOs yet the issue of co-existence is not regulated.

Geert Ritsema, GMO Campaign Co-ordinator, Friends of the Earth Europe, presented an up-date on the complaint by the US against the EU in the World Trade Organisation. Egypt had just announced that it would abstain from being a part of a WTO challenge to the European Union's 'de facto' moratorium. He believed it was very good news for the European position.

Ritsema considered that the EU had already done a good job concerning traceability and labelling of GMOs in food and feed, although problems with contamination thresholds were still not resolved. The Regulation on Traceability/Labelling showed that the EU could regulate GMOs if it wants to and he therefore urged the Union to also ensure legally binding rules for co-

existence in the near future. He agreed with many previous speakers that freedom of choice for consumers could only be ensured by such co-existence measures. Labelling would become meaningless without co-existence rules since - if everything was contaminated by GMOs - labelling would no longer make sense.

Simon Barber, Director Plant Biotechnology Unit, EuropaBio, remarked that he felt somewhat isolated at this conference. He noted that several participants had thought that the Co-existence Round Table organised by the Commission on 24th April had been biased and he pointed out that there were few people from industry, the scientific community and conventional agriculture at today's conference. He suggested that while some participants were interested in achieving coexistence, many others were more interested in pursuing the issue of co-existence as a means of stopping farmers being able to grow crops developed using genetic modification. He suggested that there was therefore a lack of balance to the conference.

Barber explained that he was attending the conference because he had been working in agriculture all his life and wanted to participate in the dialogue that this meeting could provide. In his view, modern biotechnology was considered to be a very useful plant breeding tool for the future. He agreed that it was necessary to have legislation to ensure that people used biotechnology in a responsible way.

He pointed out that all the focus so far had been on GM contamination and raised the question about contamination by others crops that had diseases and produced problems for humans. He noted that exchange of genes between plants is normal and natural – it is not a new phenomenon. If he

was farming and growing modern disease-resistant varieties, he would be concerned if a neighbouring farmer was growing old disease-susceptible varieties that could cross-pollinate his plants and render any saved seed useless as it could have lost its disease-resistance.

Farmers must have the right to choose a new technology if they so wish. Barber considered the case for 'holistic farming' - for example, a farmer who might use both organic and 'conventional' practices, as well as growing some GM crops. He suggested that maintaining old practices known to carry risks to human health and the environment did not make sense if new technology could provide better answers to agricultural problems.

He believed that a sensitive approach was needed to achieve co-existence and that would require a positive attitude and compromise from everybody's side.



Discussion

A representative of an organic organisation with 3000 members considered that co-existence could not be discussed as an issue of equal consequence for both parties. He compared the debate on co-existence of GM and non-GM to that of smokers and non-smokers. Non-smokers had been protected from smoke but smokers did not need to be protected from fresh air. The solution had been to provide separate smoking and non-smoking rooms. He believed that the co-existence debate was based on similar principles. He also agreed that it would be necessary to put in place new rules for GM farmers such as those that already existed for organic farmers.

Trix Kruger, Dutch Platform on Gene-technology, asked why the biotechnology industry did not want to accept responsibility if they considered that biotechnology was a benefit to society.

Thomas Dosch, Bioland e. V., said that biotechnology was not a part of a holistic approach as claimed by Mr Barber, but an eclectic one. Genetic manipulation always intervened in an inferior system and, according to scientific principles, those interventions led to damage in the whole system. He considered that we could not speak of compromise on this issue because that would mean the end of organic production and the domination of GM products.

Jagoda Munic, Green Action Croatia, considered that Mr Barber had hesitated when he spoke about believing that GMOs benefit to society. She wondered what his beliefs were based on and asked him to explain what the benefits were and who was going to profit from them.

Panel Response

Geert Ritsema said that Mr Barber could not accuse this conference of being unbalanced because all the stakeholders had been invited to attend. When the NGOs had accused the Commission's Round Table of imbalance, that was a different situation because GMO critics such as consumer and environmental organisations were not invited to be on the panel whereas several companies that produce and promote GMOs were. During the conference taking place today, proponents of GMOs - like himself - were invited to be at the speakers' table.

He also emphasised that he really believed that the input of all stakeholders, including the European Parliament, Commission and Council, was required in order to get comprehensive legislation on co-existence.

Jill Evans, MPE, Greens/EFA, considered that the Conference was an opportunity to encourage the dialogue between stakeholders and the European Institutions. In her view, the conference was balanced. As a Member of the European Parliament, she considered she represented a large variety of players in society and that the vast majority of them wanted regulation that would give them freedom of choice as to whether or not to buy and use GMOs.

Benedikt Härlin congratulated Mr Barber for attending the conference. In his view, unlike the Commission, the organisers of this conference had not been under the obligation to invite all stakeholders.

Simon Barber stated that he fully believed in the benefits of biotechnology and gave the example of a debilitating viral disease of papaya that had been solved through genetic manipulation. That had allowed the farmers growing papaya in Hawaii to continue cultivating their crop, and could also be extremely important for those developing countries where families grow papaya as a source of fresh fruit.

Caroline Lucas thanked all speakers and organisers as well as the participants and closed.

ANNEX I

B i o g r a p h i c a l n o t e s o f s p e a k e r s

Simon Barber, *Director, Plant Biotechnology Unit, EuropaBio, Brussels, Belgium.*

Simon's first degree from the UK was in Agricultural Botany following which he worked as an agricultural extension officer for the Government of the Republic of Zambia assisting in farmer and farm family training, and horticultural and field crop production. Following this he gained a postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Canada, and then worked for 7 years in the oilseed rape (canola) breeding programme at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Research Station in Saskatoon, Canada.

From 1990 – 1997 he worked for the regulatory branch of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and was a team member working to develop and implement a regulatory approach focusing on the biosafety of "Plants with Novel Traits."

In 1997 he joined the OECD secretariat in Paris and assisted the 29 OECD Member countries working towards biotechnology regulatory harmonization by assisting in the work of the Working Group on Harmonization of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology.

In 1999 Simon joined EuropaBio, the European Bioindustries Association and now works with companies using modern biological techniques in plant variety development.

Hiltrud Breyer was born on 22.8.1957 in Saarbrücken. She is married and has two children. She has a degree in politics and has been an active member of the environmental movement for over 30 years. Hiltrud Breyer is one of the founding members of the Greens. She used to be the Executive Green Speaker of the German Bundesland Saarland. Since 1989 she is a Member of the European Parliament. Currently she is active in the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy, the Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy (subst.), the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities (subst.) and the Delegation for relations with the Member States of ASEAN, South-East Asia and the Republic of Korea (ASEAN). Hiltrud Breyer is a Member of "Gen-ethisches Netzwerk" and the "Öko-Institut".

Jean-Louis Cazaubon, born on 5 December 1950.

He is a farmer. His main activities are the dairy production and the cultivation of maize. He is the mayor in Pouéfy (France). He is Deputy Secretary of APCA (Assemblée permanente des Chambres d'Agriculture) as well as member of "Comité Permanent Général de l'APCA".

He is the President of the working group on organic agriculture in COPA-COGECA.

He is President of the "Chambre régionale d'Agriculture de Midi-Pyrénées" and President of the "Chambre d'Agriculture des Hautes-Pyrénées"

Lise Christiansen has a Degree in agriculture with a specialisation in organic farming and the relationship between farming and nature and the environment. Before joining FDB – the Danish member organisation of Euro Coop - she spent four years with the Danish Plant Directorate, an institution under the Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries where she worked on national, EU and international legislation on organic farming. She helped plan the first inspections of GM-contamination in organic farming and has ever since followed closely the debate on GM and co-existence. Lise now works for FDB, the Danish Consumers Co-operative Society, which is the largest member- and consumer organisation in Denmark with 1.5 million consumer-members. At FDB, her responsibilities cover consumer relations and the environment - including the question of GM and co-existence. Lise is an expert-member of the Euro Coop Food and Environment Policy Working Groups.

Jillian Evans is a Member of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance in the European Parliament. She is vice-chairman of the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, Vice-Chairman and substitute of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy in the European Parliament.

She was born on May 1958 in Wales. She obtained a BA Hons in 1980 and a M. in Phil. in 1986. She was Research assistant (1980-1985), Welsh tutor (1985-1989). She used to work for National Federation of Women's Institutes and Regional organiser, CHILD - The National Infertility Support Network (1998-1999).

She was spokesperson on Europe and international affairs (1986-1994) and Chairperson (1994-1996) of In Plaid Cymru. She has been Councillor (1992-1999) and Alternate Member in the Committee of the Regions (1994-1998).

Friedrich-Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf born on 29 November 1942, Spenge (Germany), obtained a Master's diploma in farming (1968) and a Ph.D. on the 'Labour relations and socialisation of young farmers' (1982).

He is a Member of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance in the European Parliament since June 1984. He is vice-chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.

He is a founder member (1980) and chairman (since 1996) of the German Small Farmers' Association (AbL). He converted own holding to organic farming methods (early 1980s) and he farms (on a group basis) a 50 ha. holding in eastern Westphalia.

Benedikt Haerlin, born on January 1957, works for the Foundation on Future Farming in Berlin, Germany. He has been the co-ordinator of Greenpeace Internationals Genetic Engineering campaign from 1996 to 2002. Before he worked for Greenpeace Germany as an editor, campaigner and co-ordinator of their toxics campaign. Between 1984 and 1989, Haerlin served as a Member of the European Parliament (Green Group), where he specialised in genetic engineering issues in the Committee for Energy and Technology and the Environment Committee. Before he worked as a publisher and journalist in Berlin. Haerlin studied philosophy and psychology in Tuebingen and Berlin.

Dr Brian Johnson is senior advisor on biotechnology to the British statutory nature conservation agencies and is head of the Agricultural Technologies Group at English Nature, one of the UK government's advisors on nature con-

servation. He has been closely involved in the debate on potential effects of GMOs on biodiversity and other aspects of the environment. After pursuing academic research in population genetics and ecology, he has spent the last 18 years in nature conservation. He has written numerous articles in the scientific and popular press about conservation and the impact of biotechnology on the environment. Dr Johnson sits on several advisory committees concerned with biological research, regulating the release of GMOs into the environment and the development of more sustainable farming methods.

Caroline Lucas won Green Party's second County Council seat in the UK (Oxfordshire County Council, 1993-97). Joined the Green Party in 1986 and has held many positions including National Press Officer (1987-89), Co-Chair (1989-90), and National Speaker (various occasions).

Caroline has written extensively on trade issues, and is an acknowledged expert on globalisation and is an Advisory Board Member of the 'Protect the Local, Globally' think-tank (co-ordinator, Colin Hines). She has published widely including *Stopping the Great Food Swap: Relocalising Europe's Food Supply* (2001), *Watchful in Seattle: World Trade Organisation threats to Public Services, Food and the Environment* (1999), *Reforming World Trade: The Social and Environmental Priorities* (1996); and *Writing for Women* (1989). She has co-authored with Colin Hines "From Seattle to Nice: Challenging the Free Trade Agenda at the Heart of Enlargement" (2000), with Mike Woodin *The Euro or a Sustainable Future for Britain? A Green Critique of the Single Currency* (2000), with Belinda Coote "The Trade Trap" (1994) as well as the Green Party's Report *Act Local, Act Global: Greening the EU - The Challenge to Globalisation*.

With a long history of involvement with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, she was an active member of the Snowball Campaign against the US bases.

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