



Friends of
the Earth
Europe

GREENPEACE



Mr. Tonio Borg
Commissioner Health and Consumer Policy
European Commission
200 rue de La Loi
1049 Brussels

CC: Commissioners Barroso, Tajani

Brussels, 11 February 2013

Re: Upholding the principle of zero tolerance in GM food

Dear President, Dear Vice-President, Dear Commissioners,

We, the undersigned European environmental and consumers' organisations, as well as leading food processors and retail associations from Austria, Germany and Italy are writing to express our alarm at the European Commission plan to abandon 'zero tolerance', a long-standing principle of European food law.

We understand that there is a plan to bypass existing legislation on genetically modified organisms (GMO) by redefining sampling and testing in order to introduce a threshold of 0.1% for non-authorized GMOs in food.

We wish to make known our concerns about this plan since it will not only allow products contaminated with unauthorised and untested GMOs to enter the European food chain but will also severely undermine consumer confidence in European food products. A cornerstone of EU GMO legislation is that GM products that have not undergone a safety test cannot be marketed in the European Union.

Since the first shipments of GMOs arrived in Europe in 1996, European consumers have been consistently opposed to GM food. The last relevant Eurobarometer poll on the issue, in 2010, shows that two thirds of citizens are concerned about GMOs (1).¹

¹ European Commission (2010), Eurobarometer 354: Food-related risks, November 2010.
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/factsheet/docs/reporten.pdf>

European consumers expect their food to be free from GMOs – especially unauthorised and untested GMOs. Changing the zero-tolerance policy would mean depriving European consumers of the choice of totally GM-free products.

European food companies are very wary of potential GM contamination. Ending 'zero tolerance' could force operators along the food chain to implement even more expensive and burdensome internal control systems to prevent the sale of contaminated, and therefore illegal, food products.

We urge you not to abolish the fundamental EU principle of zero tolerance in food. Strict control systems – both public and private - must be kept in place to prevent any trace of non-authorised GMOs from entering the food chain and to maintain consumer confidence in European food products.

Yours sincerely,

Agnieszka Komoch, Acting Director Friends of the Earth Europe

On behalf of:

ARGE - Austrian Industry Association for GMOfree feed and food labelling

Coop Italy

EuroCoop

Greenpeace EU

VLOG - German Industry Association Food without Genetic Engineering