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## Organic farming dwarfs GM crop production in Europe

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The area dedicated to growing genetically modified (GM) crops in the European Union remains insignificant when compared with conventional and organic farming.

In 2011, **GM crops were grown on 0.1% of arable land** in Europe, compared with nearly 4% for organic. Nineteen member states cultivated no GM crops at all.

The EU has 110,849,000 hectares of arable land (excluding permanent crops as vineyards), of which only 114,525 hectares were planted with GM crops in 2011.

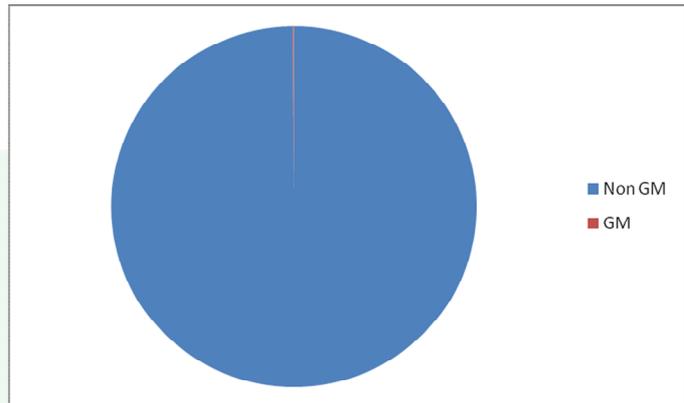
**Table 1: GMO cultivation in European countries, 2008-2011**

Country and crops	2008 (ha)	2009 (ha)	2010 (ha)	2011 (ha)
<b>Cultivation of Maize Mon810</b>				
Spain <sup>(1)</sup>	79,269	76,057	67,726	97,346
Portugal <sup>(2)</sup>	4,856	5,202	4,869	7,723
Czech Republic <sup>(3)</sup>	8,380	6,480	4,830	5,090
Poland <sup>(4)</sup>	3,000	3,000	3000	3,000
Slovakia <sup>(5)</sup>	1,931	875	1,248	760
Romania <sup>(6)</sup>	6,130	3,244	823	588
Germany <sup>(7)</sup>	3,173	0	0	0
<b>Cultivation of potato Amflora</b>				
Sweden <sup>(8)</sup>	0	0	103	16
Germany <sup>(9)</sup>	0	0	15	2
	106,739	94,858	82,614	114,525

The main exception to this picture of GM crop rejection in Europe is Spain where 97,346 hectares of Monsanto's maize were planted in 2011. The increase was mainly caused by the general expansion of the area cultivated with maize from 311,900 (21.7% GM) to 368,300 (26.4% GM) hectares.

In 2011 two GM crops were authorised for cultivation in Europe: GM-maize MON810 from Monsanto, and BASF's GM potato Amflora. The potato was planted on only 18 hectares (Sweden and Germany) in 2011. In 2010, its first year of cultivation, BASF accidentally contaminated its own GM potatoes with non-authorised GM varieties. <sup>(10)</sup>

Graph 1: Percentage of GM crops in 2011



### Inflated industry figures

Every year, the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) publishes figures on the cultivation of genetically modified (GM) crops around the world. Funded largely by the biotech industry, the ISAAA figures are frequently inflated and poorly, if at all, referenced.

The ISAAA report is a public relations attempt to put pressure on governments, and to convince investors, that GM crops are a success. The sources of data used in the global status report are unclear. Aside from the US and several European countries, very few governments record the area of GM and non-GM crops separately. Thus ISAAA must generally rely on industry data for seed sales to calculate how many hectares were planted.

### Public rejection of GM crops

In the past five years public concern in the EU about GMOs has increased to 66%, up 4 points.<sup>(11)</sup>

In Spain, GM crops have contaminated conventional and organic maize, and the human food chain, which has resulted in the largest ever demonstrations against GM-crops in Europe.<sup>(12)</sup> In Germany more than 22,000 people demonstrated in Berlin for GM-free food and against factory farms in January 2011 and 2012.<sup>(13)</sup>

### National bans

Six European countries have now banned the main EU-authorized commercial crop, Monsanto's GM maize MON810. France, Germany, Austria, Greece, Hungary and Luxembourg have all put in place bans on GM maize MON810, based on health and environmental concerns. In February 2010, Bulgaria also initiated a total ban on GMOs.<sup>(14)</sup>

The Amflora<sup>(15)</sup> potato has been banned by Austria, Luxembourg and Hungary because of the presence of an antibiotic resistance marker (ARM) gene. There are concerns that this gene could transfer horizontally into pathogenic bacteria, which would worsen the problem of antibiotic resistance in veterinary and human medicine.

The governments of France, Poland, Luxembourg and Austria have supported Hungary's legal complaint against the approval of this potato, submitted to the European Court of Justice.<sup>(16)</sup> Under EU law, plants with antibiotic-resistant genes are supposed to be phased out because they jeopardise human health.<sup>(17)</sup>

### Biotech industry in retreat

On 16<sup>th</sup> January 2012 BASF announced it is halting the development and commercialisation of GM crops in Europe due to, "lack of acceptance for this technology in many parts of Europe – from the majority of consumers, farmers and politicians".<sup>(18)</sup> BASF also stated that it has stopped the commercialisation of the Amflora potato. This will reduce the GM plants for cultivation from two to one in 2012. On 25<sup>th</sup> January 2012 Monsanto announced that it would not sell its maize MON810 in France in 2012 or beyond.<sup>(19)</sup>

## Innovative potential and real demand

The real innovator is the organic sector. Ongoing growth in consumer demand as well as farmers' interest in the most environmental friendly method of food production now characterise this sector.

The Netherlands announced a market growth of 27% in the first three quarters of 2011. For the first half of 2011, Italy and France published growth rates of 11% and 10%. The percentage of organic arable land in the European Union in 2011 was around 3.7% - 370 times more than all land planted with GM-crops. <sup>(20)</sup>

## References

- (1) The ministry of agriculture publishes numbers based on industry information on seed sales <http://www.marm.es/>
- (2) Official government figures 2011 <http://www.dgadr.pt/>
- (3) Official government figures 2011 [http://www.mzpcz.cz/aktualni\\_informace\\_gmo](http://www.mzpcz.cz/aktualni_informace_gmo)
- (4) This assumes no change throughout 2011. There are no official government figures in Poland. An article in the daily Rzeczpospolita (20 January 2010) quoted estimates of the Polish Association of Maize Producers (Polski Związek Producentów Kukurydzy) in 2009, the total acreage of MON 810 was 3000 ha: [www.rp.pl/artykul/422200.html](http://www.rp.pl/artykul/422200.html)
- (5) Official government figures 2011 <http://www.mpsr.sk/index.php?start&navID=764&navID2=764&sID=40&id=4830>
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- (12) <http://www.tierra.org/spip/spip.php?article1322>: <http://noquierotransgenicos.wordpress.com/>
- (13) <http://www.wir-haben-es-saft.de>
- (14) The National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, *Amended GMOs Act keeps the ban on release and marketing of genetically modified tobacco, vine, rose oil, wheat and on all vegetable and fruit crops*, 18 March 2010 <http://www.parliament.bg/en/news/ID/1995>
- (15) Amflora, which is owned by chemical giant BASF, is genetically modified to have a greater amount of amylopectin starch production for industrial uses.
- (16) The ban in Hungary was implemented on 18 June 2010 <http://www.fvm.gov.hu/main.php?folderID=874&ctag=articlelist&iid=1&articleID=16043>
- The ban in Luxembourg was implemented on 16 June 2010 [http://www.gouvernement.lu/salle\\_presse/communiqués/2010/06-juin/16-pomme\\_de\\_terre/index.html](http://www.gouvernement.lu/salle_presse/communiqués/2010/06-juin/16-pomme_de_terre/index.html)
- In Austria the ban took effect from 28 April 2010 [http://www.bmgfj.gv.at/cms/site/attachments/7/1/4/CH0817/CMS1272446773668/bgbla\\_2010\\_ii\\_125.pdf](http://www.bmgfj.gv.at/cms/site/attachments/7/1/4/CH0817/CMS1272446773668/bgbla_2010_ii_125.pdf)
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