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Genetically modified organisms (GMOs): a solution for the future?

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Mr Alain COUSIN and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

The Assembly believes that the time has come for a coherent stance to be adopted by all the Council of Europe's member States on the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

It recalls its [Resolution 1419 \(2005\)](#) on GMOs, in which it recommended that account be taken of four principles when defining national policies on GMOs: respecting the freedom of choice for consumers and producers, preserving sustainability in agriculture, the precautionary principle and, finally, objectivity of scientific debate and public participation.

A great variety of political strategies for dealing with GMOs are seen internationally. In the USA neither separation of the flow of goods nor mandatory labelling has been set up. In Brazil and Mexico, repeated incidents of contamination of native species have been detected. While remaining cautious in its policy, the European Union decided to allow producers and consumers permanent freedom of choice through strict approval process and labelling.

Under the EU policy framework for agricultural biotechnology, the policies in member states vary significantly. Virtually all EU member states have transcribed EU Directive 2001/18 and implement EU regulations on traceability and labelling. Most member states have set up national coexistence frameworks for biotech and non-biotech crops (Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia), or are currently preparing coexistence rules (France, Spain, the United Kingdom). Some member states continue to maintain national bans on genetically-engineered crops (Austria, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy).

The main biotech products used are in animal feed, human food, planting seeds, and in the textile industry. They consist of soybeans and products, corn and its derivatives, and cotton.

Question marks remain over the development of genetically modified crops, the scientific research in this area, the implications for food safety and human health, the animal feed chain, coexistence with traditional crops and implications for biodiversity conservation and environmental sustainability, regulatory issues, consumers' freedom of choice, free competition, international trade and the patents system and their effects on developing countries, public perception and adequate information, the precautionary principle and the notion of sustainability.

In view of the strong controversy in public and political debates over GMOs in the Council of Europe member states and bearing in mind its wish to guarantee citizens the right to live in a healthy and safe environment, the Assembly believes that a balanced study should be initiated to facilitate a public debate on a real



European policy on GMOs. The study should be based on, but not limited to, European Community legislation, taking into account that the precautionary principle is to be followed in any decision or action concerning GMOs.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed¹:

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
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