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## France

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### **Biotech-Friendly Voices in France - Farmers Food and Feed Industry**

**Report Categories:**

Biotechnology

Oilseeds and Products

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**Report Highlights:**

In the past few months, U.S. soybean-derived products for human food and animal feed consumption have been blocked in the EU, due to the European Union's zero tolerance of unauthorized biotech events. On September 21, the French food, feed and trade industry met with the United Soybean Board and USDA/ Foreign Agricultural Service representatives. Industry representatives raised their concerns for the food industry, where soy products are present in a wide range of products, and expressed regret that their interests do not appear protected by the GOF.

On September 24, the European Confederation of Maize Production organized a press conference in Paris to express their concerns about the current situation of the damages caused by the corn root worm across Europe. They stood in favor of synchronizing imports and cultivation

authorizations of biotech products. They believe that their counterparts in other parts of the world have access to biotech corn varieties and this places them in a non-competitive position.

### **General Information:**

#### **French Farmers, Food, and Feed Industry Concerned by the Current Biotech Low Level Presence Issue**

In the past few months, U.S. soybean-derived products for human food consumption have been blocked in France, Belgium, and Greece, while U.S. soybeans and soybean meal shipments for animal feed have been blocked to Germany and Spain, due to the European Union's (EU) zero tolerance of unauthorized biotech events. Traces of unauthorized biotech corn events were found in soybean products imported from the United States. France imports approximately 4 to 4.5 million metric tons (MT) of soybean meal and 300,000 to 500,000 MT of soybeans annually. Brazil and Argentina are France's largest suppliers, and for the United States, the third largest supplier, market share is 10 percent.

In August, the French industry (including food industry organization - ANIA, feed compounders organizations - SNIA and Coop de France Nutrition Animale, crushing industry – Huileries de France, grain and oilseed trading industry – Synacomex, and the milling industry – ANMF) joined their efforts to raise the low level presence (LLP) of non-EU authorized biotech corn varieties in U.S. soy exports issue. Industry leaders presented their concerns to the Government of France (GOF) through a joint letter and meetings with key representatives.

On September 21, this coalition met with the United Soybean Board and USDA/ Foreign Agricultural Service representatives. Industry representatives raised their concerns for the food industry, where soy lecithin and soy protein concentrates are present in a wide range of products. They expressed regret that their interests do not appear protected by the GOF, as the French Ministry of Agriculture and Food has relinquished the LLP issue to the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MEEDM), which is generally negative on biotech issues. One industry representative expressed that the current LLP issue represents an opportunity to “have a crisis”, and the absence of alternatives to soy would force policy makers to address the fact that the current zero tolerance standard is not viable.

#### **French Corn Producers United European Corn Growers Asking to Have Access to Biotechnology**

On September 24, the European Confederation of Maize Production (CEPM) organized a press conference at the French Corn Growers Organization (AGPM) headquarters in Paris to express their concerns about the current situation of the damages caused by the corn root worm across Europe. CEPM, chaired by the President of AGPM, federates producers in 11 EU member states (Bulgaria, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain). CEPM called for access to biotech corn varieties.

At the press conference, European corn growers expressed the fact that their counterparts in other parts of the world have access to biotech corn varieties and this places them in a non-competitive position. They stood in favor of synchronizing imports and cultivation authorizations of biotech products. Biotech products must be authorized for cultivation as fast as they are for importation and market release, otherwise EU imports of biotech products must cease. CEPM believes that all the means to fight against the corn root worm must be made available to European farmers, including chemical products and biotech corn products, as they are indispensable to complement crop rotation for more efficient pest control.

To illustrate their position, CEPM presented evidence of zone infestations by the corn root worm in Europe. An U.S. scientist and expert on this subject accompanied the group, presented the corn root worm biology, U.S. infestation, and the tools used in the United States to limit its damage.

In 2009, corn root worms were captured in three different regions (Alsace, Rhone-Alpes, and Burgundy) of the eastern part France. In two of these regions, the insect was found for the third consecutive year, indicating it is currently permanently settling in France, apparently, due to highway traffic from Northern Italy and Switzerland.