

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY
USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT
POLICY

Voluntary Public

Date: 5/11/2015

GAIN Report Number: GM15018

Germany

Post: Berlin

GMO-Free Conference in Berlin

Report Categories:

Biotechnology and Other New Production
Technologies

Approved By:

Kelly Stange

Prepared By:

Leif Erik Rehder

Report Highlights:

The international conference “GMO-free Europe – Future Opportunities and Challenges” took place in Berlin May 6-8, 2015. 400 participants discussed the opt out policy of the European Union, European Protein Strategy, TTIP, Low Level Presence, Non GMO Labelling, and Regulation of New Breeding Technologies, among others. The conference resulted in the publication of the so called 'Berlin Declaration'.

General Information:

The international conference “GMO-free Europe – Future Opportunities and Challenges” took place in Berlin May 6-8, 2015. 400 participants from 60 countries discussed in numerous workshops different topics that are related to GMO’s. Priority topics were the “opt out” policy of the European Union, European Protein Strategy, TTIP, Low Level Presence, Non GMO Labelling, and Regulation of New Breeding Technologies. The conference basically consisted of workshops from three different groups (NGOs and scientists, regional governments and the Danube Soya association). Please follow link for program: http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/fileadmin/files/gmo-free-europe/GMO-FREE-EUROPE_complete_programme.pdf)

Berlin Declaration

In a joint declaration the conference member vowed to continue their cooperation to keep the European Union free of GMOs and to develop a sustainable protein strategy for Europe. In their declaration the participants emphasized the four guiding principles and objectives: subsidiarity principle, precautionary principle, polluter-pays-principle, and the freedom of choice for everybody. Please see link for the so called ‘Berlin declaration’: (http://www.gmo-free-europe.org/fileadmin/files/gmo-free-europe/Berlin_declaration_final.pdf).

TTIP

At the conference TTIP is seen as an attack on GMO legislation (authorization, threshold, zero tolerance). For participants, TTIP serves as a vehicle to undermine EU food safety standards and TTIP would result in better access for GMO-products. Thus, the Berlin declaration demands that EU standards on health, the environment, legal certainty and democracy must not be lowered by TTIP or any other free trade agreements. And, the precautionary principle, as a fundamental principle of EU policies, must not be undermined.

Opt Out Cultivation

The participants at the conference accepted the EU directive that allows the possibility for Member States to restrict or prohibit the cultivation of GMOs on their territory. The declaration urges Member States to make the most effective use of this new directive within their national and regional legislation to ensure legal certainty of territorial bans on cultivation.

Opt Out Use of GM Feed

The new national opt out proposal for use of GMO feed was heavily discussed among participants. For some participants this is another Trojan horse that would allow better market access for GM imports since national governments cannot refer to any health and environmental reasons and an implementation could hurt common market principles. For others this was welcomed as a first step in the right direction which would allow a more democratic approval process for GMOs and could end exports to Europe.

New Technologies

The regulation of new breeding techniques (NBT’s) was heavily discussed during the conference. Common understanding was that there is no consensus in the scientific community on the safety for NBT’s. Thus, the declaration also calls for the application of the precautionary principle for new technologies of genetic modification which means that NBT’s have to be assessed in a common

coherent and transparent EU-process. NBT's also must not be abused to undermine the present EU GMO legislation and safety standards.

Non-GMO-Labeling

At the conference, there was an immediate call for a European wide harmonized approach for non-GMO-labelling. The call come despite the recent national opt out proposal for use of GMO feed in Europe. In the absence of such a system the conference participants ask national governments to implement national labelling systems for animal products fed without GMOs.