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Protesters block access to major soybean port

Report Categories:

Biotechnology - GE Plants and Animals

Oilseeds and Products

Agricultural Situation

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Report Highlights:

About 40 protesters temporarily blocked the access to port of [Brake](#) on Tuesday 20th of August to demonstrate against imports of genetically engineered soybeans, which they describe as the, "lubricant of industrial livestock farming." The protestors are members of an alliance of activists working against large-scale agricultural production, so-called GMO crops, and imported commodities. The port is a main German import point for soybeans and soybean meal, which are a high protein animal feed. Germany has a structural shortage of protein feed and must import soybeans if it is to maintain current livestock numbers.

Please find below an informal translation of a press release from the Small Farmers' Association (Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft - AbL):

Press Release

Genetically Engineered Soybeans and Futtermittel-Imports: Stop the Insanity! Farmers and Consumers stop feed shipments Brake Harbor

Brake/Unterweser, August 20, 2013: A tractor with a trailer and about 40 activists from a broad alliance of farmers, consumers, scientists and agricultural students blocked the entrance to the port of Brake at noon on Tuesday, which is one of the largest European ports for feed. The alliance criticized the far-reaching negative social and ecological consequences of global soybean imports. "In Europe, imported soy animal feed is the lubricant for industrial livestock farming, destroying farming systems here and around the world. This madness must be stopped!" said Annemarie Volling, spokeswoman for the Alliance for biotech free agriculture in the German states of Lower Saxony, Bremen, Hamburg.

In 2013, the EU27 is expected to import 26.8 million tons of soybean meal and 11.3 million tons of soybeans. Germany alone will import around 3.5 million tons of meal and 3.2 million tons of soybeans. These mainly come from Brazil and Argentina. Brake/Unterweser is one of the main ports for feed with Europe's largest storage capacities and is the main supplier for intensive farming systems in Germany.

The madness begins in the exporting countries. Paulo Alfredo Schönardie, a landless peasant from Brazil and currently a doctoral student at the University of Hamburg says: "With the soy monocultures, valuable ecological areas such as rainforests or savannas are destroyed. Small farmers are driven from their land. Young farmers like me don't get land. Today 1% of large farms own 46% of private land in Brazil. This has nothing to do with food sovereignty!"

Peter Bargfrede of the producer-consumer-cooperative in the German state of Bremen reported: "Our consumers put an emphasis on food that is produced regionally and food produced without gene technology. Therefore, we call for a mandatory labeling: If milk, eggs and meat are produced using biotech feed, this has to be clearly labeled." Farmer Ernst Steenken from the Oldenburg area adds: "Soybean imports are a gateway for the biotech industry - over 80% of the soy grown worldwide is already biotech. We have to stop that. For this reason three years ago we established a buying group for biotech free feed."

Ottmar Ilchman, dairy farmer from East Frisia and state chairman of the Small Farmers' Association (AbL) from Lower Saxony adds: "We must no longer live at the expense of others. We need to consciously focus on a rural, regional and ecological food production. Federal and state governments must ensure that the implementation of EU agricultural reforms initiate a strategic change in agricultural policy."

Christian Schüler, a scientist at the University of Kassel states: "Breeding, cultivation and animal feeding of native legumes – that means beans, peas, lupine, clover, alfalfa, etc. - must be vigorously pursued. Climate and resource-conserving agriculture means regional cultivation of feed and food production!"

Member organizations for the protest at Brake were:

AbL - Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft e.V.
Agrarbündnis Niedersachsen – vielfältig, fair, bäuerlich
ALSO – Arbeitslosenselbsthilfe Oldenburg
BDM - Bundesverband Deutscher Milchviehhalter, Landesteam Niedersachsen
Bündnis für gentechnikfreie Landwirtschaft Niedersachsen, Bremen, Hamburg
Bremer-Erzeuger-Verbraucher-Genossenschaft
Einkaufsgemeinschaft gentechnikfreie Futtermittel Oldenburg, Ammerland, Ostfriesland
Genial - gentechnikfreie Initiative für alternative Landwirtschaft
Gentechnikgruppe für einen gentechnikfreien Landkreis Oldenburg
jAbL – junge Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft
Witzenhäuser Agrar-Studierende, Landwirte u. Gärtner für eine gentechnikfreie Landwirtschaft

The German-language press release may be found at:

http://db.zs-intern.de/uploads/1377002391-AbL-PM-13-08-20-Aktion%20in%20Brake%20-%20GV-Soja%20und%20Futtermittel-Importe_Stoppt%20den%20Wahnsinn.pdf

A video of the demonstration may be seen at:

http://www.radiobremen.de/fernsehen/buten_un_binnen/video50012-popup.html]

Please also see the following USDA links for more information on related German policies:

AgMinistry publishes draft "Protein Strategy"

(http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Ag%20Ministry%20publishes%20draft%20'protein%20strategy'%20_Berlin_Germany_8-8-2012.pdf)

Germany Plans to Reduce Farm use of Antibiotics

(http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Germany%20plans%20to%20reduce%20the%20use%20of%20antibiotics%20in%20animal%20husbandry%20_Berlin_Germany_10-2-2012.pdf)

New Animal Welfare Standards Could Impact Trade

(http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/New%20Animal%20Welfare%20Standards%20Can%20Impact%20Trade%20_Berlin_Germany_10-23-2012.pdf)

Germany – Agricultural Biotechnology Annual

(http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Agricultural%20Biotechnology%20Annual_Berlin_Germany_6-17-2013.pdf)