

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Germany

Post: Berlin

State of Hesse to Become Latest GMO-free Zone

Report Categories:

Biotechnology - GE Plants and Animals

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Report Highlights:

A recent coalition agreement between the Christian Democratic Party and the Green Party in the German state of Hesse calls for the region to be 'biotech free.' This is indicative of state and local action to prevent the future planting of so-called 'GMO' crops in Germany.

The State of Hesse Added to Germany's "biotech-free zones"

A recent coalition agreement between the Christian Democratic party and the Green party in the German state of Hesse calls for the region's agriculture to be 'biotech free' but this action is largely symbolic. With regard to plantings, Germany has at the federal level already banned the one GMO crop that is permitted to be cultivated in Europe (a corn called MON810). With regard to feed, Germany has a structural shortage of animal protein feed and farmers in Germany, including those in Hesse, are expected to continue to import several million tons of soybeans annually, the vast majority of which is 'GMO.'

There are over 200 self-declared 'biotech-free zones' in Germany and the first was founded in 2004. Biotech-free areas are formed by voluntary agreement among farmers to not plant biotech crops in the region but there is no legal enforcement mechanism connected to the declaration. In part, these declarations are used to help promote a region's image and to attract tourism.

Comment: In recent years there has been an increase in Green Party ministers of agriculture at the state (Laender) level in Germany (currently 6 out of 16 states). However, locally-based initiatives against GMOs are increasingly being supported by Germany's other main political parties and are no longer merely indicative of Green Party leadership. In this sense, the Hesse coalition agreement may be considered typical of the policy direction now being taken at the state level on this issue. End Comment.

The following is an unofficial translation of the part of the coalition agreement dealing with agricultural biotechnology:

"We want to keep agriculture and forestry in Hesse GM-free. To illustrate this claim, Hesse will join the "European Network of GMO-free regions". We support freedom from the gene-technology at the European level. In addition, we are committed to be GMO-free on all state-owned land and will create a protein strategy for Hesse to support farmers and breeders who, for example, seek to use and reproduce GMO-free feeds."

For more complete information on agricultural biotechnology in Germany, please see our report GM13026 at:

http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Agricultural%20Biotechnology%20Annual_Berlin_Germ

A copy of the Hesse coalition agreement may be found (in Germany) at: <http://www.gruene-hessen.de/partei/files/2013/12/Koa-Vertrag-gesamt.pdf> (see Pg. 25, lines 1141-1148)

A map of Germany's biotech-free zones may be found at: <http://www.gentechnikfreie-regionen.de/regionen-gemeinden/zahlen-fakten-analysen/gentechnikfreie-flaechennutzung-in-deutschland.html>