



Brussels, 4 March 2009

To the attention of the Presidents of the Political Groups:

Mr Joseph DAUL, Chair of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats

Mr Martin SCHULZ, Chair of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament

Mr Graham WATSON, Chair of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

Mr Brian CROWLEY, Co-Chair of the Union for Europe of the Nations Group

Mrs Cristiana MUSCARDINI, Co-Chair of the Union for Europe of the Nations Group

Mr Francis WURTZ, Chair of the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left

Mrs Hanne DAHL, Co-Chair of Independence/Democracy Group

Mr Nigel FARAGE, Co-Chair of Independence/Democracy Group

Mrs Irena BELOHORSKÁ, Observer for the Non-attached Members

Dear colleagues,

We would like to draw your attention to an issue the Parliament should urgently address. It concerns the unacceptable manner with which President Barroso is trying to force through the authorisation of highly controversial genetically modified plant varieties in the EU, against clear opposition from the majority of citizens, against the objections of his own competent Commissioner colleagues and against serious doubts repeatedly expressed by a substantial number of ministers of environment of EU Member States.

As you may know, the Commission has recently proposed to lift the existing bans on the authorisation of the GMO variety of maize (MON810) in four Member States (Austria, Hungary, France and Greece) through a Commission decree. The national bans were introduced as a result of serious safety concerns. The proposal to lift the bans in Hungary and Austria was rejected on 2 March 2009 by a qualified majority in the Environment Council. The Commission had tried to force Member States to permit cultivation of MON 810 GM maize on two previous occasions (2006 and 2007) and received similar signals of caution from a majority of member states based on qualified doubts about impacts of the cultivation of GMO seeds on public health, biodiversity and farming.

Instead of taking these concerns seriously, President Barroso has chosen to increase pressure on his competent Commissioners, in order to force authorisation of GMOs through and to boost the cultivation of GMOs in the EU in a highly questionable manner.

In June 2008, Mr Barroso wrote to the Prime Ministers of member states requesting each country to nominate a "sherpa" to represent the overall view of government in order to hold informal discussions on how to accelerate GM approvals. Two meetings of this Sherpa group have been held, in July and October 2008, but the competent authorities of Member States were not informed about the discussions and outcome of these informal meetings. In December 2008, the Council of ministers unanimously underlined the right of member states to prohibit GMO cultivation on the grounds of specific regional conditions. Mr. Barroso's pressure to lift bans and approve GMO varieties clearly tries to undermine these Council conclusions.

Furthermore, Mr. Barroso has wrongly claimed that the ruling of the World Trade Organisation's dispute settlement panel against EU legislation on GMOs had questioned the right of EU member states to ban GMOs. In fact the EU's regulatory and policy regime on GMOs was not put into question by the WTO, nor did the panel challenge the right of countries to introduce strict regulatory frameworks at the national level.

In light of this clear breach of trust and the Commission's attempts to force the hand of unwilling Member States and citizens who do not agree with the Commission's position on GMOs, we would therefore like to suggest, dear colleagues, to consider a *conditional motion of censure* against the Commission, taking as an example the strategy successfully adopted by Parliament in 1997 in order to oblige the Commission to take precise measures to overcome the BSE crisis.

The President of the Commission should have given by then a politically binding commitment of implementation that:

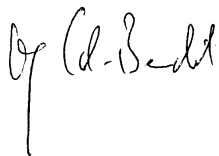
- No further authorisations of the cultivation of GMOs will be proposed, including Bt11 (Syngenta) and 1507 (Dupont/ Pioneer), Amflora (BASF) before these varieties fully comply with the criteria mentioned below;
- In the near future, a proposal for the long awaited risk assessment and, based on this, a proposal for approval or rejection of a new authorisation of MON810 for cultivation will be presented;
- No measures against Member States shall be proposed forcing them to authorise GMOs until the risk assessment mentioned below has been carried out;
- The Parliament shall be informed about advisory and lobbying activities of concerned industries including specifically Europabio and other relevant parties interested in the promotion of GMO cultivation in the EU.

The President of the Commission shall initiate the following, or agree to a politically binding commitment to implement the December 2008 Council decisions including:

- An appraisal and a comprehensive list of specific regional agronomical and environmental conditions with respect to the potential cultivation of a GMO within the European Union, including suggestions for specific risk management measures to protect them (see paragraphs 1 and 16 of the Council Conclusions on GMOs of 4 Dec 2008);

- The assessment of the long-term risks as part of any proposal for cultivation (3). An overview, including a list, on the availability of independent studies (i.e. neither conducted nor financed by the applicant) on the risk and properties of a specific GMO as part of any proposal for cultivation or use as food and feed (paragraphs 10, 11);
- The assessment of environmental consequences of cultivation of specific GMOs with respect to their own pesticidal properties as well as changed agricultural practices regarding the use of certain pesticides where GMOs are resistant to such pesticides in accordance with Directive 91/414 as part of any proposals for cultivation (paragraph 4)
- The assessment of socio-economic implications of proposed approvals for cultivation (paragraph 7);
- The critical appraisal of the composition of the scientific committee of EFSA, reflecting the Council decision of December 2008;

If the President of the Commission will not agree to these demands and take a clear position, we will initiate a motion of censure against the Commission at the upcoming March II Plenary session.



Daniel Cohn-Bendit
Co-President
Greens/EFA Group



Monica Frassoni
Co-President
Greens/EFA Group