

ESA Observations

on

Prerequisites for Coexistence of different farming, agricultural and food production systems in the European Union

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Introduction

Agricultural production and trade are carried out in an increasingly globalised economic and regulatory environment. This development is likely to even increase in pace and scale with the upcoming WTO negotiations and the expressed aim of a further liberalisation of trade and opening up of markets in agricultural products.

At the same time, there is a fast growing introduction of an increasing number of Genetically Modified Organisms in plants in an ever growing number of countries and –in parallel- an increasing demand for organically grown products for feed use and food consumption.

ESA European Seed Association, representing the EU seed industry from research, plant breeding to seed production and marketing, is convinced that Coexistence of these different farming, agricultural and food production systems in Europe is possible.

With a view to the prerequisites for such a Coexistence, ESA hereby would like to point to the following observations.

We thereby focus in particular on possibilities to assure Coexistence by using the means of practical and sustainable thresholds for the adventitious presence of one product in another:

1. The study of the Joint Research Centre JRC elaborated for the European Commission

The authors of the study conclude that

- Coexistence of different farming systems is possible
- Thresholds are a means to organize such a Coexistence
- In the cases of the examined crops (rape, maize and potatoes), it is not practically possible to meet a threshold of 0.1 % for Adventitious Presence

- Measures necessary to meet any given threshold depend e.g. on the size of the farm, on the shape and location of the fields, on climate and soil conditions and many others
- Under certain conditions, e.g. when trying to conform to particularly strict thresholds in seed production of rape seed within organic farming, an increase in production costs of up to 40 % is to be expected.

Provided practicable and sustainable thresholds are fixed, it will be possible for the seed industry to meet such realistic requirements with reasonable effort and at certain costs.

2. The Opinion of the Scientific Committee on Plants (SCP) of 7.3.2001

In its Opinion on the Adventitious Presence of GM Seeds in Conventional Seeds, the Scientific Committee on Plants comes to the conclusion that

- Only under ideal seed production conditions will it be possible to meet the thresholds proposed by the European Commission in its Working Paper on amending the Seed Marketing Directives, i. e. 0.3 % of cross-pollinating crops and 0.5 % and 0.7% of self-pollinating crops and crops reproduced by means of vegetative propagation.
- The labelling threshold of 1 % of GMO ingredients in food and feed may need to be reconsidered because of the dynamic evolution of the system.
- A zero tolerance for non-part C authorized events, including part B or third country authorised events, is not obtainable in practice.

Conclusion:

There are several scientifically founded opinions as to the feasibility and sustainability of certain thresholds in order to assure Coexistence of different farming, agricultural and food production systems in Europe.

In view of the conclusions of these studies and in view of the practical farming situation in Europe as well as worldwide, ESA is of the opinion that it is possible to organize an economically viable Coexistence in Europe by means of practical and sustainable thresholds.

All different players in the food chain will have to make reasonable efforts to this effect in order to be in conformity with the thresholds set.

The European Seed Industry already today has sophisticated and effective means at its disposal and applies these means in order to assure an optimum Quality Management and Control to meet the demands of its customers from different farming and food production channels. These systems, however, are and must be based on realistic, practical and cost effective thresholds.