

TELL ME WHAT I EAT!

CAMPAIGN READER

What is the
FYEG Organic
Food
Campaign?

What Can
We Do?
p. 20-21

And What
does the
Green Group
do?
p. 18-19



fyeg
Federation of Young
European Greens

**A Million Questions,
Only One FYEG Cam-
paign Reader!**





INTRODUCTION

By Joke Van de Putte,
Campaign Co-ordinator

H! To you, dear reader, I present this campaign reader. A reader on what you eat, why you eat it, and how someone else produces what you eat. That seems a pretty important question, doesn't it? Let's face it, everybody eats. Even Daniel Cohn-Bendit eats. Well, probably. People you hold dearly, your friends, your family, your sweetheart... Averagely, everybody consumes three meals a day. This shows how important food is in our lives.

Unfortunately, we tend not to care all too much about what we eat. After a hard day's work, we just rush into the supermarket and grab anything out of the racks that looks distantly nutritious. We don't even take a peek at the ingredients label. What is an emulgator? What is E-951? A color additive? You'd have to be a scientist to understand. To you and me, it's the great unknown. We don't have a clue of what these things do to our bodies.

And then we're only talking about the risks involved for our own health. But food involves more than just the final product, meant to nourish us. It is an important part of the entire ecosystem. Whole chunks of the Brazilian rainforest are being torn down daily, so that our future steaks can graze. In our food choice, we often don't bother whether the food has been grown in a sustainable way. We don't know how it was produced, neither where.

Sustainability is a key element in the Green view on the world. We only have one planet to live on, and it's supposed to be there for everyone, including the Third World and future generations. For us, Young European Greens, this topic is so important that we decided to do a campaign on it. With this campaign, we aim to raise consumers' awareness on what they eat. We believe

organic food is a way to protect our environment and to feed the world in a sustainable way at the same time. GMO's, as one of the greatest threats to organic food and our environment as a whole, just don't fit into this picture.

For your comfort, we have created this very nifty reader. If you are a young green somewhere in Europe, you can inspire yourself on this reader to knock out the critics with arguments so bright that they give light in the dark. The same arguments can be

Sustainability is a key element in the Green view on the world. GMO's just don't fit into this picture. Organic food does.

used when you are campaigning in the streets, to convince the passers-by. This reader offers you ideas for actions aimed at reaching the public. Because to green the world, you'll need to put in a bit of effort!

In the meanwhile, the senior greens haven't been just sitting on their asses either. In this reader, you can find out how the European Green Party thinks about the same issues and how our green MEP's have been working on sustainable food in the European Parliament.

So what can we do more than wish you happy readings? If you weren't convinced about the benefits of organic food before procuring this reader, you will probably rush to the nearest organic shop right after you devoured the last letter of this magnificent piece of literature.



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WHAT IS FYEG?

The FEDERATION OF YOUNG EUROPEAN GREENS explained in five minutes & two cups of coffee

The Federation of Young European Greens (FYEG) was founded in 1988 in Belgium. It was founded with the aim of bringing young environmental groups from all over Europe together to encourage both mutual understanding and mutual action to promote a greener Europe. By Maarten Coertjens

Modestly beginning with a few Member Organisations (MOs) from both Eastern and Western Europe, FYEG has grown quite substantially. It has nearly 30 MOs from all regions of Europe. MOs vary in size, having from 70 to thousands of members. Organisations are either the youth wings of Green Parties or environmental non governmental youth organisations (youth NGOs). The Green Group in the European Parliament has been kind enough to give us a permanent office in the European Parliament buildings in Brussels. FYEG hosts a formal meeting once a year as its General Assembly, where MOs send delegates to decide on policy and strategy and elect an Executive Committee (EC). The EC board of 9 people is elected to serve for a year. The Executive Committee leads and coordinates activities of the Federation. There is no leadership hierarchy and we insist on having a flat structured and gender balanced committee. Though, EC members do have individual areas of responsibility. They have been assisted by a fulltime paid office co-ordinator since 1999. Together they function in smaller teams to increase efficiency, but important decisions are made by the whole EC.

Political Platform

Our opinions and statements are based on our political platform, which is discussed and updated each year during our General Assembly. By far most of our mem-

bers are under 30 years of age and all our events are planned and run by young voluntary activists from across Europe.

We run a variety of activities over the span of a year with the objective of facilitating co-operation and mutual working between Member Organisations - without FYEG our MOs would be like ships in the night, passing each other by chance and rarely co-operating except for the odd bilateral exchange. Thus, we hold at least four major events annually which vary between meetings, seminars, study sessions, summer camps, political debates or training sessions. These are held in different parts of Europe where our members can meet, exchange views, broaden their horizons and find common cause with other Europeans, creating a real European sense of identity. FYEG also organises International Campaigns such as: "Common Future", for the European Union Elections; "Destination Europe", on Migration; and now "Tell me What I Eat".

Methods

Various methods are used in order to achieve our objectives. One of the most important is the spread of information. Ecosprinter is our newsletter which publishes our point of view and informs our activists of past and upcoming events. FYEG also has active email lists for different issues and different projects over the year. We regularly attend seminars and meetings organised by the European Commis-



sion, the Council of Europe, the European Youth Forum (of which we are full members), the EGP (of which we are observers) and other partner organisations.

This set-up realises FYEG's vision of empowering young people to play a part in European civil society rather than passively consuming events organised for them by adults. We want to develop a future Europe for young people and by young people with a number of opportunities to express themselves, based on environmental and social justice.

Expansion to the East

During the last few years, we focused strongly on expanding our network toward Central and Eastern Europe. This is reflected in the recent full membership of organisations from the Czech Republic, Hungary, former Yugoslavia and Ukraine. Also, a sister organisation called Co-operation and Development Network Eastern Europe (CDN) was born.

In the future we aim to continue developing our network in the CEE region, in light of the enlargement and further European integration processes, and also focus on other networks and regions such as Euro-Med. We will also seek closer co-operation with other green organisations outside Europe and also other international organisations.

FYEG is a functioning and active organisation. FYEG is growing and becoming more dynamic, more effective. We are reaching out to new MOs and our MOs are becoming better organized, with our support. We will carry on supporting Europe and its Green future. Wir begrünen die Welt!

“So when You’re in Trouble, call...The C-TEAM”

Fyeg Tell Me What I Eat Campaign Team populated chiefly with former criminals, says Frits Bolkestein

You didn't really think this whole campaign was being engineered by goblins, did you now? Wow. No really, the ones orchestrating this tasty revolt are the courageous boys and girls of the Campaign Team. But who are they? Do they wash their feet daily? Can they really fly? And, most important, are they still single?



Miren Maialen Samper

I'm currently completing my MSc in Sustainable Development in Ireland. I'm heavily involved in local groups like the Dublin Food Coop, an organic food cooperative. I'm an active volunteer for Sustainable Ireland, where I took part in the launch of the 'GMO free Ireland' campaign on Earth day.

I'm a campaigner and lobbyist and an editor for the first Irish Local sustainable Newspaper called the Local Planet. In 2003 I spent a year in Brazil, where I became acutely aware of the urgency of fighting for a more sustainable world, spreading the words of The World Social forum in Porto Alegre, where I participated on two occasions. I believe that globalisation in the food industry has increased to such an extent that a few corporations possess almost total control over the food supply chain: from primary source to product. This to the detriment of the consumers choice and also to many farmers' livelihoods.

I hope to raise awareness amongst citizens and local groups about issues such as: fair trade, GMO's and organic products. I'm interested in the role of advocacy groups in communicating these messages, especially to young people.

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Tommi Ståhlberg

Hello!

I'm a 27-year old single father from Finland. I'm active in Finnish Young Greens' Federation and also in the Helsinki Greens. I'm very interested in all food matters - one of my most beloved hobbies is cooking. I can spend hours in the kitchen preparing dishes just like a swiss clock smith, well, prepares clocks. I'm also very pro slow food. I study computer sciences, though sometimes I wonder why...

One can make a difference!

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Jolanta Skubiszewska

I work as an intern at the Federation of Young European Greens. I've worked in Warsaw as a Program Coordinator at the Heinrich Boell Foundation - a German political foundation affiliated with the Green Party. Besides working at the HBF, I've been working on crucial Green issues such as tolerance and non-discrimination for a long time.

I would like to offer my experience in campaigning while gaining knowledge about GMOs. I have no experience in ecological campaigning yet but I would like to gain it. While living in Poland I really wasn't aware of the problem of GMOs as food is still natural there. I suppose the same or a similar situation exists in most CEE countries and I would very much like to protect the status quo.

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Arsen Rudan

I'm a student of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Belgrade, Serbia, and in the meanwhile in November I'm also finishing my master course "Food Safety and Quality" (master thesis: Implementation of Modern Safety and Quality Concepts in Serbian Organic Food Production. Future of Organic Food Production in Serbia). These studies are financed by the EC (DG for Education and Culture). During the last two years I had the unique opportunity of being taught by several great professors from the EU and Serbia.

I did a workshop for the Serbian Young Greens about GMOs, organic and conventional food. I also wrote one article recently about the same topic and it can be found on the website of Serbian Green Youth (www.zelenaomladina.org.yu).

I am not a member of any political party, but I'm green in heart and soul.

I was an OSCE intern (The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) in the Serbian Parliament in 2004 (Department for Agriculture). I finished two courses on biodiversity in Serbia, one course on civil society and the course "Safety in the Agro-food chain" (Ghent, Belgium).

I cooperate with several Serbian NGOs on food and environmental issues.

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Veronique Marx

I've just finished a MSc Nature, Society and Environmental Policy at the School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford. I was awarded internship in 2004 at the Institute for European Environmental Policy, London and in 2002 at the European Center for Geodynamics and Seismology, Luxembourg. Most of all however, I'm absolutely enthusiastic about every issue that deals with the environment, in particular about food and agriculture.

I became interested in these topics during my Geography undergraduate degree. This year in my Master Course, I've been able to concentrate on my particular interest in the globalisation of the food supply chain and its environmental and social consequences. I'm especially interested in the campaign because of its emphasis on young people. I believe that many of the young people of Europe are not informed well enough on the food that they consume, and therefore do not care enough.

I'm able to work with a wide range of people: from dealing with some difficult students in student societies and sports teams to researchers of an environmental NGO. I have enjoyed most of my experiences as a team member and therefore like to take part in the "Tell me what I eat" campaign too. I really enjoy planning and organising within a group of people and working together on a common objective that I strongly feel committed to.

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Joke Van de Putte

I'm 24 years old, born and raised in the city of Aalst. After finishing high school, I went to university in Brussels and Berlin to study applied languages (Dutch, French, German) and I got the diploma of interpreter.

Right now, I'm studying Philosophy at the University of Ghent. I am writing my thesis on what happiness is about, and am interested in how our brain functions.

As the Campaign Co-ordinator of Fyeg, I like to co-operate with other Young European Greens on a common European Campaign. A Europeanwide campaign enables young people from all over Europe to share their concerns, learn from each other and work on an alternative approach of our society. Especially the topic of safe and fair food and its consequences on our health is in the main interest of young people, the future parents of Europe.

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Gert Boel

I'm a history student, and a member of Jong Groen!, the Flemish young greens, who are in their turn a member of the great and praiseworthy FYEG. I write a lot of articles for the Jong Groen e-magazine and my student magazine Schamper, and so I decided to modestly help the campaign by writing, correcting and lay-outing the publication materials.

Also, as a historian, I have knowledge on economic relationships, and the way inequality in the world economy is consolidated (even more after attending a class on world-systems-analysis). Unfortunately, one has to realise that food may well be a vital but sparse item for some unfortunate people in this world, but for others it is merely an economic asset.

And on the light-hearted side: food is just fun. And good food is big fun. Whether you're cooking for your future partner, your present partner or former partner, a well-prepared spaghetti bolognese always adds that extra bit of spice to life that makes it all so exciting.

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A VIEW FROM ABOVE: The state of Organic Food & GMO's

Because we need to inform you in order to indoctrinate you, we need to, erm, provide you with some very good information first. A good question one might ask her or himself is: "what's going on in the European food world?" That, my friend, is a question this vibrant campaign team will answer for you in several parts. Starting with a general overview of Organic Farming and GMO infiltration nowadays.

By Véronique & Arsen

The last few years have seen a significantly increased interest in organic food, that is, "food grown using those husbandry principles and techniques that predated the introduction of modern agrochemicals and intensive farming methods" (Institute of Food Science and Technology, 2005). Organic farmers therefore do not use synthetic pesticides or fertilizers. This means that organic farming management relies on developing biological diversity in the field to disrupt habitat for pest organisms, and the purposeful maintenance and replenishment of soil fertility.

Some of the essential characteristics of organic systems include: design and implementation of an "organic system plan" that describes the practices used in producing crops and livestock products, a detailed record-keeping system that tracks all products from the field to point of sale, and maintenance of buffer zone to prevent inadvertent contamination from adjacent conventional fields.

The Organic Conviction

Organic meat, dairy products and eggs are produced from animals that are fed organic feed and allowed access to the outdoors. They must be kept in living conditions that accommodate the natural behaviour of the animals. Organic livestock must also not be given antibiotics, hormones or medications in the absence of illness; however they may be vaccinated against disease and parasiticide use is strictly regulated. Livestock diseases and parasites are controlled primarily through preventive measures such as rotational grazing, balanced diet, sanitary housing and stress reduction.

The term "organic" refers thus to a process and not the final product. The entitlement to label vegetables, meat or any other foodstuff as "organic" de-

pends on the way in which it was produced and the manners involved in its processing. All products that are sold as "organic" must therefore be certified by a specific certification body. In Europe, inspectors verify that organic practices such as long-term soil management, buffering between organic farms and neighbouring conventional farms (conventional farming refers to industrial, intensified farming and should not be confused with traditional farming that is still being practiced in poorer regions of the world), and processing methods are being followed according to the rules set by the EU (EU Regulation 2092/91).

This regulation lays down in detail how crop products must be produced, processed and packaged to qualify for the description of "organic". The regulation also specifies detailed criteria for the inspection and subsequent certification of food producers and processors. However, each country so far, still has its own certification bodies, which carry out the annual inspection. Each certification body imposes at least the standards, that are prescribed by the EU regulation, but is free to add stricter rules for certification. Each product sold as "organic" is encrypted with the specific label of the certifying body. Note that the description of "Organic" is only used in the English-speaking world, in other markets "Bio", "Öko", or "Eco" are the more usual descriptions.

The Organic Market

One problem created through such strict regulation forms is that many farmers in the Central and Eastern European Countries do not have the financial and technical means to apply for organic certification, and therefore need to sell their actually organically produced food on the conventional market, without benefiting from the higher prices they would obtain on the organic market.

The market for organic food, and as such the land area that is organically farmed, has been increasing substantially over the past decade; even though still constituting a small (but growing) proportion of European agriculture. Organic foods can now be found in large supermarkets (up to 80%), as well as through a rapidly growing direct marketing such as farmers' markets and box schemes. Although the gap between organically grown food and conventional food products is decreasing, the cost of organic food is higher than conventional food. This is because the organic price tag more closely reflects the true cost of growing the food: substituting labour and intensive management for chemicals, the health and environmental costs of which are borne by society. Organically produced foods must meet stricter regulation governing all these steps than conventional foods. The intensive management and labour used in organic production are frequently (though not always) more expensive than the chemicals routinely used on conventional farms. There is mounting evidence that if all the indirect costs of conventional food production, and the high subsidies for agriculture, were factored into the price of food, organic food would cost the same, or more likely, be cheaper than conventional food.

Organic food is thus one alternative to industrial, large-scale farming. It is important to bear in mind that organic food production is not merely about human health. It is also about creating a sustainable system of agriculture, that is less harmful for our natural environment and creates employment rather than substituting human labour and nature with machines, GMOs or chemical fertilisers.

GMOs

Throughout the entire history of humankind, people engaged in agriculture were trying to enhance their productivity. In order to achieve higher yields, they were continuously changing breeding techniques and even the objects of their production. It is very important at this point to make a clear distinction between traditional plant breeding and plant biotechnol-

ogy (genetically modified organisms – GMO's). Traditional plant breeding combines all genes of the parent plants, so both wanted and unwanted traits may be expressed in the plant offspring. Only plants from the same species, or closely related species, can be interbred. On the contrary, GM is often defined as "any technique which alters the genetic material of an organism using a method that would not occur by natural mating or recombination". These techniques allow e.g. bacteria and plants to be interbred.

Sources

Sources of GM-food are different: micro-organisms (e.g. modified yeasts, modified lactobacilli, enzymes from the modified micro-organisms), animals (super-salmon), but up till now techniques of genetic engineering were mostly used on plants (nearly all cultivated species were modified). Objectives of the genetic modification of plants are: modifying expression of endogenous genes (turning genes off/on) or expressing genes with useful traits from other organisms.

After some key discoveries in the field of genetics in the late 1970s, scientists started researches on possibilities of GM-food production in the early 1980s. The first GM-plant intended for human consumption was so called FS tomato (Flavr Savr tomato). It was approved in 1994 by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the United States. This attempt of introducing GM-tomato in the market was a failure because of its high market price, but great multinational companies did not give up. In 1996 several new GM-plant species were put in the market: Bt cotton, maize, herbicide-resistant

soybean, canola... By 2000 more than 55 percent of United States soybean production was GM.

The main proponents of these genetically engineered crops today are some great multinational companies who deal with herbicides, pesticides and pharmaceuticals such as Monsanto, DuPont etc. Despite their claims that GM-technologies are "clean and efficient" and that increasing world population will get enough food only if it will be GM-food ("GM will feed the world"), the general opinion is quite the opposite. All this promotion of GM-food is only in terms of increasing the profit of these companies, rising their primary production. A lot more pesticides and herbicides can be sold and used if there are herbicide and pesticide-resistant plants in the fields. And this fact, obviously, has nothing to do with "feeding the world", but only with making more money and polluting the world.

Potential Risks

There are four main groups of potential serious risks from GMOs: health risks, environmental risks, social risks and ethical problems. Regarding potential risks to human health, there are not enough scientific data yet, but there have been some worrying reports on allergic reactions, antibiotic resistance and removal of valuable nutritional substances in food because of the use of GM-food. On the other hand, biodiversity may be very seriously endangered because of the existence of GM-crops in the fields (e.g. non-GM growing of oilseed rape is no longer feasible in Canada). The third group are social objections. GM food will certainly not solve the problems

of famine in the world, but will help in the establishment of monopolies in agriculture and will threaten the interests and rights of the consumers. Ethical objections are that, with introduction of these technologies, science is "playing God" (crossing of species boundaries) and that GM will disrupt the integrity, beauty and balance of nature.

GM-food production in the world is constantly increasing, but a very interesting fact is that only five countries hold 98 % of GM planting today (USA 63 %, Argentina 13 %, Canada 4.4 %, Brazil 4 %, China 4 %). Other countries with a very low level of GM production (<1 %) are: India, Uruguay, South-Africa, Australia, Rumania, Spain. The most important GM-species are: soybeans, maize, oilseed rape, cotton, papaya. In the pipeline are: rice, wheat, beet, mustard, sunflower... GM tomatoes, potatoes and tobacco were withdrawn from the market. Fortunately, citizens of Europe are very concerned about the GM-food. In one questionnaire conducted by Eurobarometer in 2001 (www.europa.eu.int), on the question "Is GMO based food dangerous?", 56.5 % replied positive and 26.5 % replied that they are not sure, but concerned.

Food Revolution

Almost 95% wanted to have the right to choose when it comes to GMOs. EU legislation on GM-food and GMOs in general was always, more or less, strict since the very first regulation (Directive 90/220/EEC). The situation today is that there is practically no GM food in the supermarkets and almost 2/3 of the major food producers and retailers have a non-GM policy. However, some problems remained with labeling the animal origin products where cattle was fed with GM plants. There is no significant commercial planting of GMOs in EU. Hundreds of communities and regions in Europe have declared themselves "GMO free".

It is often said that, after "Green Revolution" from 1960s and 1970s (increasing the agricultural production in developing countries) and "GM Revolution" from 1990s, the time has come in the 21st century for "Organic Revolution".



GMO's are a threat to worldwide biodiversity

NORTHERN EUROPE: The Northern Exposure

Scandinavia and the Baltic countries can be considered extremes in both location and weather conditions when it comes to agriculture. Although there are great differences between the countries – Lithuania being rather similar to Central Europe and Iceland for example being quite in its own league because of its volcanic soil and mountains. By Tommi

Still there is one quality in common with all the countries in Scandinavia and the Baltic countries – short period of growth. The short vegetation season sets a great challenge especially for organic food producing where no chemical fertilizers are allowed. It also raises the question if genetically modified organisms (GMOs) can be a solution for larger crops. Generally speaking it seems that the popularity of organic food is on the rise. Also the general opinion is strictly against GM-food, especially in the older EU member states. No products containing GMOs have been on the market yet. But the biotechnology companies are lobbying quite intensively and it's expected that some GM products will be on the market later this year.

Sweden

In Sweden there have been 64 GMO field experiments by 2002. Most experiments were with potato, rape and sugar beet although the potatoes with modified starch

were meant for making paper, not as food. The Experiments with modified starch potatoes have been quite large in extent – over 600 hectares. In the year 1998, 70% of the farmers reported that they do not want to grow any species containing GMOs.

Complete Purity

In the year 2002 this number was 77%. The Swedish roof organization of farmers – Lantbrukarnas rikförbund (LRF) – has given quite general statements on GMOs. They proclaim that ethical values of consumers and farmers should be respected, and that issue number one is food safety. LRF also states that 100% GM-freedom is not possible in organic food production and that thresholds are necessary.

Ekologiska landbrukarna is a labor union and rendez-vous for organic food producers. The organization keeps connection with officials and other organizations and acts as a supervisor for suppliers in EU and Sweden. Ekologiska lantbrukarna

does not stand for the term 'GMO free' in organic food production because complete purity of GMOs cannot be granted. Instead they support the term 'produced without GMOs'. They also state that the priority should be making clear, EU level laws on liability questions. When it comes to environmental or health care consequences the biotech company should always be held responsible. This means that the liability of GM technology in farming should be carried by the ones that use it – not by organic food farmers or by consumers that want to buy genetically unmodified food. The organization also says that the whole food branch should move away step by step from the conventional food production.

Finland

The Finnish organic food association Luomuliitto has not made a common statement on GMOs. Spokesman Esa Partanen has commented in the year 1999 that organic food producing does not

need GM technology. He has also stated that the consumers want the opposite progress of introducing GMOs into farming. Luomuliitto proclaimed in the year 2002 that there should be clear rules for growing GM plants. The responsibility should be with the farmers growing GM plants – not with the organic food farmers. Practically, this means that if an organic farm is contaminated with GMOs, the expenses of transition time should be covered by the GM farmer. This also means that a transition time shouldn't be a fluke and that during this time, the products cannot be marketed as organic.

Liability

Maa- ja metsätaloustuottajain Keskusliitto (MTK) is a Finnish roof organization for all farmers. MTK states that when it comes to introducing GMOs, the principle of carefulness and strict safety standards should be observed. The organization also states that the consumers should always have the possibility to realize the difference between GMO products and non-GMO products. This basically means clear product labelling.

Concerning liability laws, the MTK stands for a policy where liability

of the producers is restricted to matters in which the GM farmers can have an effect by their own action. Thus the MTK states that the farmer should not be held responsible for negative consequences, even if they are health-related, if it is caused by species that are

officially approved for farming.

In these cases, MTK believes that the biotech company behind the organism should be held responsible. It also states that the locations of GM farms should be kept secret and open only for officials (MTK 2002). In fact, the official opinion of MTK about GMOs is carefully positive. The director Markku Suojanen is convinced that if GM technology is not introduced in EU, Finland's farming will lose its competitiveness. Suojanen also sees GM plants having a positive impact on organic food production as long as it is strictly monitored. The summary is that the consumers decide.



An organic cow, with its calf, in the meadow

Estonia

On the 10th of March 2005, the campaign 'GMO-free Estonia' was launched. It involves the Estonian Council of Environmental NGOs, the Estonian Farmers' Federation, the Fund of Organic Agriculture, the Center for Ecological Technologies and consumers' organizations from four cities. The aim is to establish GMO-free zones and help the farmers express that they want to be GMO-free. The farmers have a concrete possibility of action – they can declare their land GMO-free by filling in a declaration. A sample can be found at <http://www.greengate.ee>.

Summary

Scandinavia and the Baltics are almost GMO-free right now, but the question is: for how long? Consumers want safe products and ventilate suspicion towards GMOs. Some organizations and biotech companies are strongly lobbying for GMOs. The popularity of organic food is on the rise and the variety of products is increasing. The number of organic farms is rising although there have been years where the numbers have gone down several percents. It's pleasing to realize that the food producers see organic food as a possibility and GMOs as a risk that we should not take.



The wide plains of Scandinavia offer endless possibilities for enthusiastic organic farmers, who manage to cope with the specific climate

EASTERN EUROPE: Foiling the GM Invasion

On how cheap GMOs and big money try to sneak into the region

By Aleksandra Mazurova

Until the early 90s, the food production in Eastern Europe was completely controlled by the communist governments of the respective countries. However, after the Iron Curtain fell, the region became subject to intensive liberalisation, and the food sector also opened its gates for the free market. But since the free market has started to bring GMOs into the region lately, voices are rising to inch the gates a bit tighter once again.

Public attitudes towards GMOs differ widely in different regions. For most Americans, GM technologies are useful for boosting food production. West Europeans have a different attitude. For them, the words "genetic modified food" can ruin their appetite. Eastern European countries did not have any GM products for a long time. However, at the end of 1990s, more and more GM products were imported, and attractive packaging charmed the consumers.

Square Tomatoes

Most of the people in this region didn't know that the USA proclaimed GMOs the future of agriculture. Through GM you can give your products whatever characteristics you desire. For example, you can store unripe tomatoes several months in a temperature lower than 12 degrees. As soon as you want to eat the tomatoes, you simply put them in a temperature higher than 12 degrees and they become ripe and "fresh". You can even produce square tomatoes. They pack easier. With GMO, people achieved record harvests. The USA is the world leader in working with GMOs. Today, out of 60 millions hectares occupied by GM plants, 66% are in the USA alone.

The main reason why GMO started to be developed is commercial benefit. People who invented GM products hardly thought about people who were dying from starvation. The USA is one of the three biggest world importers of agricultural products, but they have started to sell GM food to other countries. Unfortunately for them, governments of Western European countries are in no hurry to buy cheap GM foods. The main reason is that till now nobody has proved that GM products are safe for consumers and environment. Quite the contrary, European scientists

have found that these products can be dangerous for people and for the environment, especially for biodiversity. The World Health Organization considers GM products as food that can be toxic, carcinogenic and cause allergic reactions in the human body.

But the main point why countries in West Europe are against GMOs now is a lack of research in this field. Investigations in GM technology have started just at the end of the last century. Understanding the real effect of GM products on people and the environment takes a much longer time.

GMO-Free Russia

Farmers in Eastern Europe hardly use GMO. Russia is one of a few European countries that still remains absolutely GMO-free. According to the official information there is no growing of GMOs in Russia for commercial purposes (only for scientific research). Each GM variety must pass a Federal Environmental Assessment and only before it can be included into the national seed list authorized for growing. For instance, the famous company Monsanto tried to push its GM potato through this assessment in 2001, but the Federal Environmental Assessment stopped it.

However GM products could quite easily permeate the market of Eastern Europe. Dashing foreign packages attracted attention of consumers. Food industries started to buy cheap raw materials for their products and nobody worried about it not being very natural. For instance, in the last 10 years the import of GM soy-beans from the USA to Russia has increased 100 times. Most meat companies add GMOs to their products and do not announce this on packages. GM organisms amount for 60-70% of the components in some products without any informa-

tion on the package. Most people have no idea that they are eating GM products every day. Recently, more and more information about GM products and about its disadvantages appeared in newspapers and magazines. People started to prefer local food instead of products from abroad. But often they don't even suspect that many components for local products were imported from abroad and may be GM.

Change

The situation in Eastern Europe started to change when some countries were becoming members of the EU. Due to the laws of the European Union these countries had to adopt the Western European laws concerning GM products. All the new EU countries set up laws about GMO marking on products, but most of these states lack the means to imply these laws. Only the Czech Republic and Hungary have good laboratories to check food on GMO. However most countries in Eastern Europe try their best to stop the spreading of GMO. Slovenia declares itself a GMO free country. About 80% of Poles live in regions that consider themselves to be GMO free.

In countries of Eastern Europe, like Moldova, Ukraine, Belorussia and Russia the situation is somewhat different now. On the one hand most people are against GM food. There are a lot of debates on how to reduce GMOs in food and that these products should be labelled likewise. On the other hand, some researchers came to the conclusion that we have to start using GMO in our agriculture. For example, several years ago, the Russian Minister of agriculture Aleksej Gordeev declared that "biotechnologies are an effective tool for agriculture" and signed the document on relevant cooperation with the USA. However, on the 1st of July 2004, a new Russian law about GMO has been adopted. All products that have 0,9% or more GM components mention this on the package. But for now you can hardly find companies that mark their packaging for GMOs.

Organic Food à la Lenin

The best way to protect yourself from



An Organic Food shop in Eastern Europe

non-healthy food is to eat organic products. Organic farming has rapidly developed world-wide during the last few years. Today organic agriculture is the most sustainable type of agriculture that helps to save nature, support soil fertility and provides people with healthy and fresh food. The total organically managed area is more than 24 million hectares world-wide. Nearly half of the organic food sales are generated in Europe. The boom of organic agriculture happened in Western Europe in the 1990s. Growth has, however, slowed down recently.

The organic food market is rapidly developing in Eastern European countries, supported by growing domestic demand and exportation to Western Europe. The first organic organization in Eastern Europe was started in Budapest, Hungary, at the beginning of the 1980s. In 1989 the first group of organic holders (Ekoland) was established in Poland. Shortly after that organic organizations were founded in Czech Republic, Lithuania and Yugoslavia. Just five years later they had been also formed in Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Romania, Russia and Slovakia. But for a long time organic agriculture developed very slowly in these countries and hardly covered even 0,5% of all agricultural production. Just a few years ago countries in Eastern Europe started to develop their own national standards. The Czech Republic leads the developing of organic agriculture in Eastern Europe, 6% (255 000 hectares) of its agricultural land is organic, which is more than in the United Kingdom or Germany. The next biggest players are Ukraine, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland. Many researchers predict

enough to sell them as organic. Most farms do not have an essential depot for organic fertilizers and necessary agricultural equipment. The second problem is that many people, even farmers, do not understand the requirements of organic agriculture or even the definition. Also, it's hard to find a good and sustainable market for these products. First of all Eastern European countries want to sell organic food to the EU. But countries that are not in the EU have some difficulties to export their products to that region because of import regulations.

EU Funding

Eastern European countries that are in the EU have more opportunities to develop organic agriculture. First of all it will be easier for these countries to sell organic food inside the EU. The second advantage is that they get EU funding to develop their organic agriculture. Lithuania exported 40% of its organic products to the EU before joining the EU and they expect a significant increase of this number in the coming years. Lithuania has projects with countries from Western Europe concerning the development of organic agriculture. One of these projects is a Lithuanian-Sweden program that aims at exchanging organic knowledge and experience to make organic agriculture more effective. Since 2000 the Lithuanian certification company "EcoAgros" is generally recognized and a special label for certified organic food was established. The development of organic agriculture is one of the main aims of national agricultural programs.

It is obvious that more and more people orient their food preference towards food quality first and only than think of its price. Food companies that think about their successful future development have already understood this and do their best to produce high quality, low-priced food. Thus, quality of food and how it is produced is hitting the main need of consumers. This trend first appeared in Western Europe but today it has moved to Eastern Europe as well. In the coming years we are likely to expect the publication of new norms and laws that will strongly regulate food production. At least people will know exactly what they pay for.

that Eastern Europe will become one of the most important regions in the world for organic food production.

The market for organic food and drinks is still very small in Eastern Europe, but it is growing fast, mainly in the larger cities. Market surveys estimate that in the Czech Republic one fifth of the population regularly consumes organic products.

An interesting exception is Russia. There, import of organic food products from Western Europe is growing. This has happened because there still are no national standards for organic food and just a few farms are trying to practice organic agriculture. But this trend seems to be an exception in the region, because for the most part the evidence is strong that Eastern European organic food producers are now starting to answer the increasing demands for organic foods in Western Europe as well as for their own domestic markets.

Advantages

Eastern Europe does have several advantages for development of organic agriculture. First of all, soils are cleaner there than in Western Europe, so there is no need to wait 3 years for chemical substances to be purged from the land. Another advantage is the cheaper labor and much more people in this regions work in agriculture. If in Western Europe only 1-5% people work in agriculture, in Eastern Europe there are 15-20%.

One major snag in the development of organic agriculture is the lack of investment. Although crops are clean from any chemical substances it is not

THE BALKANS: Fighting for Food

Raising Awareness and using Natural Advantages

The Balkans are a strange region when it comes to Organic Food production. On the one hand, the region was scarred by terrible wars no longer than ten years ago, leaving the population with other concerns than organic food production. On the other hand, the farmers in the region have always had a tradition of non-industrial, environment-friendly farming.

The general fact that stands for the Balkans region concerning genetically modified (GM) and organic food is that the population at the moment is not fully aware yet of the dangers and benefits, connected to these two types of food. After a long and painful period of transition and numerous wars in the Balkans, as economies were devastated, people fought for any kind of food. Modern global food safety issues seemed to be too far away from the reality.

A Good Meal

On the other hand, it is well known for the people of the Balkans for ages that they always preferred a good and, more or less, healthy meal. In the last few years, with the growth of the reconstruction and stability processes in the region, interest of people in what they are eating started to grow as well. They finally began to ask questions like: what is GM-food? Do we eat it? Should we eat it? Why? What is organic food? Why is it better? Why is it more expensive? Where can we buy it? What are BSE and dioxin crises? Are we in danger? In the Balkans, GM-crops are being

commercially grown mostly in Romania and Bulgaria. The most important GM-plants grown in these countries are soybeans, maize and oilseed rape. There were several attempts to import GM-seeds in some other countries of the region (such as Serbia and Montenegro or Croatia). These attempts were prevented on time by authorities, but still there are some rumors about the existence of GM-crops in the Balkan countries, other than Romania and Bulgaria. Even if so, the yields on the fields under GM-crops are insignificant at the moment. Nevertheless, that can become a very big threat for the future because of the well-known ability of spreading that stands for GM-plants.

Punishment

One of the greatest incidents regarding GM-soybeans occurred in Vojvodina, Serbia's northern province in August 2003 when the authorities of the province ordered 56 hectares of GM-crops to be destroyed. The authorities stressed that this and similar attempts to produce GM-plants will be punished according to the law. One of the very reasonable explanations was that Serbia, being a great soybeans exporter to European Union, cannot afford to produce GM-soybeans which are forbidden for use inside European Union. However, great GM-lobbyists continued with their constant promotion of GM.

The greatest problem for Serbia and Montenegro is the current lack of one central national reference laboratory for food safety where GM-crops could be easily identified using PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) or other modern techniques. On the whole terri-

tory of this country there are only several small laboratories capable of performing these kinds of tests, but, at the moment, no one pays them to do research on suspicious samples. Help of European Union and other Western countries in this field would be more than welcome.

What should be done in the future, regarding GM-food production in the Balkans region? First of all, the bans and moratoriums (where they exist) for GM-food production, trade and use (for human as well as for animal use) should be prolonged. The population of the region should be, as much as possible, well informed and introduced with basic facts about this kind of food. Campaigns like this done by FYEG could be very helpful especially if appropriately supported by media and local politicians. Of course, the outcome of the whole GM-food situation on the Balkans will, mostly of all, depend on European Union's attitude towards it, because almost all of the Balkans countries are politically and economically aspiring to join EU. That's why decisions brought by the authorities in Brussels will play the key role in the future period.

Big Food Chains

Organic food production, as one of the fastest growing trends in world's agriculture, is currently recognized as an alternative to both conventional and especially GM-food production only by a small number of people in the Balkans. That is mostly because of the lack of information, but even more because of the hard financial situation of the population in the majority of these countries.

Small shops selling healthy food (so-called "Bioshops") started to



The Balkans have a wide range of possibilities for organic farming, thanks to their natural resources

occur in Belgrade, capital of Serbia and Montenegro, in the beginning of 1990's. These shops are also present today, but they cannot compare at all with some big organic food chains in the world, like Whole Foods in the USA. They have a very limited number of customers and, what is even more important, consumers can never be sure if the food sold in these shops is really organic or not.

European Union

Lately however, people in the Balkans are more and more starting to consider organic farming a valid option. Several "organic farms" are founded and dozens of them are preparing to start growing organic food. First of all, soil in the region, and this especially stands for Serbia, is not at all polluted or to a very low extent. Chemical and pharmaceutical industries and other great polluters do not work for decades. Disadvantages from the past became advantages in the present. Of course, promoting the idea of organic food should not be used only in terms of money and export of products into European Union and other countries. It should also help to develop sense

for the importance of enhancing biodiversity, promoting the concept of sustainable development and encouraging consumers to become aware of their rights.

In central Serbia an association of small farmers started with organic food production in cooperation with a Canadian certifying agency in 2004. Farmers were highly motivated with fair prices for their products and ensured export. But, what is most important, they were content with the fact that they will not have to use pesticides and fertilizers as they did before. This project gave very satisfactory results up till now.

Co-operation

One of the greatest problems in the Balkans regarding organic food production is certainly certification. It is not sufficient if producers "think" or are "sure" that food produced on their fields is healthy and organic. Someone needs to check that out, and certify it. There are several specialized agencies in the region who declare that they can do the certification, but the lack of experience is also obvious. Agencies from abroad would be more than welcome.

The other problems are the standards and regulations which should be used in order to control organic production. For example, in the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia the law on organic food production has been introduced in 2000, but that law happened to be very out of date and not conformable with real conditions, so it was never completely used. A new law in the Republic of Serbia is expected to be implied in the beginning of 2006 and it is considered as much better.

A general conclusion about the present state and prospects for the future regarding GM-food and organic food in the Balkans is that this region is currently one of the most endangered in Europe, but also that this region has great potentials which should be used. What is needed are: strict rules, big financial investments and effort in the field of providing information to the consumers. Of course, as we mentioned before, the future will mostly depend on decisions and guidelines from Brussels.

By Arsen

SOUTHERN EUROPE: Safeguarding consumer's rights

The Gmo-Free zones movement is growing in Europe

By Miren Maialen

Southern Europe is a region with a rich agricultural tradition. Also, the mediterranean climate allows the growth of several specific crops, which are highly desired by EU neighbours up north. But does the high demand and the burning financial pressure force the farmers into using unsustainable techniques, or is the region's organic sector thriving?

Since the quality of organic food is strongly dependant on the absence of GMOs, establishing "permissible contamination thresholds" would be a serious mistake. This would infringe the right of consumers to freely choose food free of transgenic materials. The coexistence of organic farming with GMO's crops is not possible under the current rules.

Taking Position

In Italy more than 500 cities have taken a position against the use of GMOs in agriculture. The combined area of those communities that have already signed a resolution against GMOs and those that recently have indicated an intention to ban GMOs means that nearly 80% of Italy's territory is declared GMO free.

In Spain the regions of Castilla la Mancha, Asturias and the Balearic Islands have passed parliament deliberations, in Catalonia such a deliberation is under discussion. Andalucía and the Basque country have a 5-year moratorium on GM growing.

In the States of Malta and Cyprus the possibility of country-wide GMO-free zones is being discussed in parliament. The region of Tuscany issues legislation to protect from GMO's, establishing a law to prohibit the cultivation of GMO crops in the year 2000. The law was made first because of the Precautionary Principle and second to develop the Region of Tuscany's quality of food production, which is grown locally for the mutual benefit of farmers and the Region, and which is incompatible with GMOs. The law



An organic farm in Mallorca (photo: www.mallorcaorganics.com)

forbids the cultivation of GMO crops in Tuscany, and also forbids the procurement by public bodies of any food containing GM ingredients. It has also established a system of controls and sanctions to ensure compliance with the law.

In the case of Spain, and after a change of Government, the Environment Minister, Cristina Narbona, announced in June last year that she will consult independent researchers before deciding if Spain should continue growing genetically modified organisms (GMO's). A joint inquiry has been set up by the agriculture and environment ministries in order to consult the widest possible spectrum of scientific advice.

Portugal

In the last 10 years, organic farming in Portugal started to develop although research and education on organic farming is not very widespread, except for some private initiatives. The supply is still less than the demand, reflecting the fact that organic farming is still at an initial stage.

The increase in the number of certified organic farmers has been particularly strong in the districts along the border with Spain (Trás-os-Montes, Beira Interior and Alentejo;) where the effects of pollution are not yet as noticeable and where the traditional farming sys-

tems and crops are perfectly adapted to the regions, allowing for relatively easy pest control. Thus the conversion to organic farming is broadly accepted there, particularly among the youngest generation of farmers.

Organic farming may play an important role in the revival of the rural areas, as it usually demands more labour, thus acting as a job generator. It allows people to settle in rural areas, particularly young people. There are currently some impending threats to organic farming, namely urban sprawl and the levels of pollution generated by conventional farming and other sources.

The future of organic farming in Portugal depends on younger generations, especially to increase market awareness on organics, as well as to connect with the Mediterranean culture. This culture is prized for its gastronomic wisdom and is diversified and tasty.

McDonalds

A research study shows that although young Portuguese generally express themselves in favour of the environment, they definitely prefer to eat "junk food" rather than "bio food", due to the massive advertising by fast-food chains like McDonalds, who are contributing to a drastic change in the diet of the population.

There have been some initiatives in



Organic products for sale in Rome

Portugal to promote organic farming. For example helping the association of organic farmers by Beira Interior and the University in Lisbon, in order to promote and distribute their products.

The farmers' interest in organic agriculture clearly started when financial support by the European Union (EU Regulation 2078/92) was offered. In some cases, such as the olive groves of the northern and central areas, traditional farming approximates organic farming methods, which eases conversion. The increase of awareness in health and environmental issues in Portugal is growing, a trend reflected throughout the EU, which explains the rising interest in natural foods and fibres.

However, these positive factors for the expansion of organic production may not be enough to guarantee a continuous increase in the future, since several obstacles hinder the farmers' performance.

On the move

Spain is moving towards becoming Europe's fourth largest organic food producer. The interest in organic livestock including cattle, dairy cows, sheep, goats, hogs, chickens for eggs and meat farming has accelerated dramatically in Spain during the 1990's. The major product categories grown are: olive trees, cereals and legumes, nuts, and vineyards. Fruits, vegetables and other minor crops are also raised. About 80% of Spain's output of organic products is exported to other EU countries, mainly Germany and the UK. Domestic use of organic products accounts for less than 1% of total food consumption and there is a ne-

cessity for increasing consumer awareness.

Typical organic consumers include young people eager to try new products, 40- to 50-year-olds, medium-to-high income

earners interested in

their health and respect to the environment.

Spain is a Mediterranean European country where organic production is better developed than the domestic market. Some reasons for that situation are: the natural conditions of the land that allow a higher diversity of production. Also beneficial are the numerous ecosystems and the favourable climate for early-cultivation. In the winter season approximately 80% of the typical Mediterranean crops, which are organically grown, are exported, mostly to central and northern European countries.

Iberian Pioneers

The first "pioneer" organic farmers were strongly motivated, and they made contracts for the products for which traders, normally from other countries (France, Germany or United Kingdom), could guarantee a market. Today the organic farming sector is more complex, characterised by a highly diversified production in all regions. More conventional farmers are converting to organic farming. They are better organized and have more information available than the "old" organic farmers.

Currently in some cases organic farming represents the most realistic economic alternative to conventional agriculture so that more young farmers decide to stay in the rural areas. Spanish organics have already come a long way. But this new generation of growers wants to follow through the logic from start to finish.

In Italy the earliest pioneering experiences in organic agriculture date back to the nineteen-sixties, but only took

off in the nineteen-seventies, involving more and more farmers and consumers seeking an improved quality of life and consumption.

During the mid eighties, the first local coordination agencies established the "Commissione Nazionale Cos'è Biologico" (National Commission for Organic Agriculture) which was made up of representatives of organisations and consumers' associations from each Italian region. The Commission established the first nation-wide self-regulatory standards for organic farming.

Organico Italiano

Once EU-Regulation 2092/91 was implemented, the numerous small associations of organic farmers and the producers and consumers committees operating in every region reorganised themselves, joining forces through mergers and a federative network. Today, there are 16 officially recognised certification agencies operating in Italy.

In the nineteen-nineties the organic sector in Italy showed one of the largest average annual growth rates in Europe. Since 2002 the number of farms has, however, decreased, because in some regions aids are not available any more. Italy is emerging as a major producer of organic foods among EU countries. Most of Italy's production is concentrated in southern Italy, Sardinia and Sicily, although some commercial production occurs in the north. Roughly half of Italy's organic output is exported, most to northern Europe. Major exports include wheat, corn, and rice and their products, olive oil, wine, fruits and vegetables. More than 1,300 businesses, many of which are classed as cottage industries, claim to be processing organic foods, primarily tomato-based products, cereals and pasta.

Northern Italy, with its more affluent consumers, is the major market for organics in Italy. Although organic products are traditionally sold in specialty stores, major supermarket chains are setting up special organic products sections. Consumers are also interested in organic olive oil, wine, vinegar, sugar, grains and cereals, but there is little demand for organic milk, cheese or meat. Prices for organic foods are reported to range 20 to 200% above conventional prices.

WESTERN EUROPE: Fear for the Unknown

How WESTERN-EUROPEANS chicken out on GMO's, but forget ORGANIC FOOD

By Miren, Véronique & Gert

In Denmark, Greenpeace was sentenced by a federal court in June this year, for violations of the recently introduced terrorism law. The environmental organization had demonstrated against GMO's in the buildings of the Danish Agricultural Organization, in 2003.

This incident illustrates the way passions are flaming around this topic in Western Europe: people from the pro and con camp draw from a seemingly endless barrel of ethical and ecological arguments. Meanwhile, organic food remains a non-spectacular, and thus unimportant topic in the region.

A poll conducted among citizens of the European Union ascertained that 54 percent of the Union's citizens consider GMO's to be dangerous. In Belgium, 51 percent of those questioned conceded with the proposition that "food produced with genetically manipulated ingredients is dangerous". The number is slightly lower than the European average, but the difference is neglectable. This seems like a benign sign: the average Western European person remains skeptical towards GMO's.

Skeptics

But the motivations of the skeptics are more diverse than we would hope: conservatism plays an important role in the adversity, and the ranks of the anti-GMO-folks are filled with right-wing people as well as Greens. However, the right-wing opposition to genetic manipulation is not as sincere as one may think. In 2002, the local Green Party in the Flemish municipality of Jabbeke pressed forward a proposal to make the town a "GMO-free zone". No GMO-test fields would be allowed on the grounds of the community. The proposal got only one pro-vote, from the Green fraction itself.

All other parties voted against, or abstained their vote. The right-wing par-

ties mainly voted against. The most loyal and consistent supporters of genetic manipulation are the Liberals: "I think it's possible to solve a lot of problems through genetic manipulation," said Patrick Van Krunkelsven, a member of senate for the Liberals. The other right-wing parties, the Christian-Democrat CD&V, and the fascist Vlaams Belang were slightly slower in the choice of their point of view. Only when the topic started becoming an "item" in the public opinion, did they stir. However, they still try to hold a pretty low profile when it comes to the topic. Other ethical topics, such as euthanasia and abortion, remain classics in their ethical rethorics, and GMO's are slow in catching up.

Where GMO's do play an important role for the conservative policymakers, is Austria. The regional government of Upper Austria requested the European authorities to receive the status of GMO-free zone in 2002. The Commission denied them this zone, but the government of Upper Austria successfully challenged the commission on this topic. The government of Upper Austria is led by the conservative ÖVP, who not long before governed together with Jorg Haiders extreme-right wing FPÖ. One may conclude that not tampering with God's creation is also an anti-GMO-argument, albeit not a very Green one.

Organic Sorrow

In the meanwhile, Organic Farming doesn't seem to enflame any passionate ethical debates. Western Europe isn't as concerned about organic farming, but that doesn't mean that organic farming doesn't exist in Western Europe. Organic products have long been articles consumed almost exclusively by the slightly richer middle classes, but the market is growing. But not everywhere: "Organic farming could use some aid," headlined the Flemish newspaper De Standaard on the 7th of June this year. The main point is that organic farming isn't growing at all in Flanders, it's actually shrinking.

After the short-lived "healthy food"-

frenzy blew over in '99 (after a crisis in which large numbers of industrial-grown chickens got infested with dioxine), the organic sector once again sunk back in relative lethargy, despite efforts of the Green party, which was in government from '99 till 2004. Last year the surface on which organic products were being grown shrunk a good 6,5 percent. The Flemish government has been taking action to promote organic farming, among others by the introduction of a bio-label and the injection of half a million euros in the sector. But one may rightfully doubt the possibilities of organic farming in a country where the agricultural sector as a whole has completely collapsed during the last century.

Austria

Neighboring countries have a much livelier organic farming sector. France traditionally leads the way, although its sector stagnated during the mid-90's, due to government regulations. However, after 1996 the number of organic farms seemed to explode: a growth number of 20 % in 2000 was even considered as a slight disappointment. Since 1998, the government also supports the sector with financial means. The high level of state recognition during the 80's (the introduction of the state AB-Logo for organic products) also gave the French organic sector international appeal.

But still, only 1,3 % of the total agricultural surface is being used in an organic way in France. This is of course also due to the statistical distortion: France simply has the largest agricultural surface, and lots of this surface is already taken by large industrial farms. In Austria, however, a stunning 13 % of the agricultural surface is being used in an organic way. The number is reached under influence of both state guidance and individual initiatives: lots of young farmers decide to explore the new organic market, while the state provides subsidies as well as guidance programs.

Austria's northern neighbour, Germany, also boasts a thriving organic

sector. The German government, and especially the Greens in government, hold forward some ambitious goals for the future: by 2010, some 20 % of the German agricultural area should be managed in an organic way. In 2001, the government introduced several measures to make these bold resolutions come true. These include the improved support of organic agriculture, the implementation of the federal programme for organic agriculture as well as the introduction of a national organic seal.

The UK GMO Tale

Genetically modified tomatoes first appeared on British supermarket shelves in 1996, but the consumer furore that surrounded GM technology did not erupt in the UK until February 1999. This outcry was caused by a study claiming to show that young laboratory rats fed GM potatoes were showing

cluded that opposition in relation to acceptance was five to one, which was reinforced by a deep mistrust towards governments and large multinationals (<http://www.gmnation.org/>).

UK Government attitudes towards GMOs and the organic food market are almost paradoxical: on the one hand, despite this public furor, the first license for the commercial cultivation of a GM crop was given out a few months after the report was published. In the event, the licensee – Bayer CropScience- decided to abandon the UK as potential market, which means that no GM crops are likely to be grown in Britain for some years to come. But modified ingredients and animal feed continue to be imported and sold in the UK. Today still, government officials continue to support the lifting of the ban on GM food and crops and have shown themselves to be keen to re-introduce GM crops in the UK.

On the other hand, paradoxically, the government supports the growth of the national organic food sector. Effort is mainly dedicated to help farmers change from conventional to organic farming. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for example, has launched an "Action Plan to Develop Organic Food and Farming" in England to ensure a stable and strategic growth of the organic sector. Under this strategy, a new aid scheme known as the Organic Entry-Level Stewardship (OELS) payments has been introduced. The OELS, coming into force in 2005, will provide continuing payments for organic farmers in England. Similar organic agri-environmental schemes are being introduced in Wales and Scotland.

In response to growing consumer interest and increased state support, the British market for organic food has undergone major developments over the past 10 years. Sales of organic food in the UK have increased tenfold and fully organic land area has reached a record high. By April 2004 for example, land managed to organic standards, represented 4% of the total agricultural land area. There are now nearly 4,000 licensed organic farms throughout Britain.

In sum, Britain stands on a shaking footing at the moment. Public and Government opinions on the future of GMOs in the UK, are increasingly diverging, and as such, questioning the

future evolution of the organic food sector.

Ireland GMO-free

At a launch happening organised by the GM Free Ireland Network on the 22nd of April, Earth Day 2005, one thousand GMO-Free Zones were declared throughout Ireland. The GM Free Ireland Network states that introduction of patented GMO crops in Ireland would cause all farmers to be contaminated, lose their right to save and plant their own seeds, and burden them with annual licensing fees, higher production costs, superweeds, bureaucracy, labelling, traceability, liability issues, and patent infringement lawsuits with no insurance available to cover the risks. GM animal feed is already causing Irish farmers to lose access to prime EU export markets, and destroying Ireland's world famous clean green reputation as 'Ireland the food island.'

At the European Conference on GMO-free Regions, Biodiversity and Rural Development last January, it was concluded that "Ireland's particular situation – as an island that is better protected from unwanted gene transfer by wind-borne pollen than most European areas – makes it a perfect place to preserve the seeds heritage and the diversity of presently available commercial seeds, by staying GMO-free".

In Ireland there are over 1,000 registered organic farmers and processors. There are indications for an increase in the Irish organic food market in the medium term with growth in direct selling, via farm gate, box schemes and farmers markets. But it is important to promote greater awareness and appreciation of how food is produced is needed.

Up until the implementation of EEC Regulation 2092/91, developments related to organic production in Ireland were in the hands of a small group of dedicated organic operators, who worked mainly on a voluntary basis to develop a high quality of standards for organic production. In 1981 The Irish Organic Farmers' and Growers' Association (IOFGA) was established. The Irish Organic Centre in the border County of Leitrim is currently assisting farmers in all matters of conversion to organic methods as part of an education project in the whole of Ireland.

Organic goat cheese being crafted (courtesy of Organic Goat Farm De Volle Maan/Quatremaires & Food Photo)



signs of ill health. Ever since, debates about the introduction of "frankenfoods" onto the market have caused fierce public opposition and have led to notorious actions by environmental groups, such as the Greenpeace action to rip up some GM maize in the trial fields of Lincolnshire in 1999.

The breaking report demonstrating nation-wide public opposition to GMOs appeared in September 2003. This report, known as the "GM Nation", showed that the overwhelming majority of Britons were dead against biotechnology for food, and that big supermarkets had stopped selling most GM products. The report con-

The Green's view on GMOs and organic food

By Joke

Food safety, sustainability and fair food are at the very heart of green politics. Preserving a fair balance between nature's resources and human's needs is what being green is all about.

It is linked to equity and social justice, for without this fair balance, the food supply of the poorest is endangered. But elsewhere, resources are also threatened by industrial farming and genetic engineering. The Greens have an important influence on the European debate on food safety, therefore it is interesting to take a look at their view on GMOs and organic food.

GMOs

As the European Green Party (EGP) states in its 2004 Manifesto: "The first

that GMOs are safe. The use of GMOs in agriculture and in the food chain unnecessarily increases risks without offering benefits to our societies. (...)"

Contamination

The European Greens strongly support a Europe without GMOs: if this cannot be achieved, then they are in favour of all citizen or regional and national authorities' initiatives to establish GMO-free zones. In this respect, it is essential that the EU takes all possible precautionary legislative measures, in order to keep seeds free of GMO. The EGP considers the consequences of the use of GMOs for the environment and human health scientifically unclear. Instead of taking the risk of an unforeseen evolution of biologically engineered organisms that cannot be stopped, the Greens urge for a fair access to the world's resources in order to feed the world.

At the European Parliament, the

Non Member States which go far beyond the Union's obligations under international law. Several legislative and political initiatives of the Green/EFA Group led to an amendment of the GMO legislation in 2003, which will enable Member States to take measures to ensure co-existence of organic, conventional and GM farming. Thanks to the Green/EFA Group, European legislation acknowledged for the first time that GMO pollution is a real and legitimate concern.

Upon a Green initiative, the European Parliament adopted, with a large majority, a strong position on co-existence. In its resolution, the EP urges the other European institutions "not to proceed with the approval of any further genetically modified plant varieties until binding rules on co-existence, backed up by a system of liability based firmly on the 'polluter pays' principle, have been agreed and implemented". The EP also insists on

lift the so-called de-facto moratorium. No other parliamentary group watched these initiatives of the Commission to lift the moratorium closer than the Greens. Since 1999, the Green/EFA Group attacked the Commission in numerous press releases whenever it had started another initiative to persuade the competent regulatory committee to resume the approval procedure for GMO marketing applications.

Coexistence

Moreover, it mobilised NGOs and other stakeholders at European and national level to lobby for the rejection of the Commission's initiatives. As a result, the procedures for authorising new GMOs according to the improved legislation remain highly controversial, and the EU member states rarely achieve the necessary majorities for authorising or rejecting new GM crops, thus leaving the final decision to the European Commission. The Greens urge the Commission not to take a solitary decision and to take into account the will of the citizens, who do

not want GMOs in their food.

The initiatives of the Green/EFA group show that the greens are an important actor in the battle against GMOs. Together with other stakeholders and NGOs, they succeeded in preventing the European Commission from authorising companies to overwhelm the EU with GMOs. Recently, on June 24th 2005, the council of environmental ministers rejected the European Commission's proposal to lift the ban on five types of GM crops including Syngenta's antibiotic-resistant corn Bt176, a ban that is currently in place in 8 member states. 22 of 25 member states voted against. The Greens stated that they were pleased with the European ministers taking into account the desires of the people and they hope the European Commission will not neglect this strong signal from the European citizens.

Organic Food

According to the Greens, organic farming is the most consequent form of sustainable farming systems. It should be promoted and supported in order to give the citizens of Europe easy access to healthy and tasty food. A key element for the development of organic farming is the EU action plan,



The Greens | European Free Alliance
in the European Parliament

on which the Greens drafted a parliamentary report.

The increase of the amount of organic farms and the recognition of the benefits of organic farming show that organic farming has become a noteworthy element in the European agricultural landscape. Organic farming nevertheless still faces many obstacles on its path. Therefore, the Greens/EFA group pleads for a more effective European action plan for organic farming than the current Commission's European Action Plan.

A recent study indicates that price and availability are the two variables that will have the greatest influence on consumers' shopping habits. The Green/EFA group therefore believes the action plan should mainly focus on these variables.

Although it is tending to grow narrower, the price gap between organic and conventional products is still large. As the Commission itself admits, organic farming not only produces food, but also plays a broader environmental and social role. Therefore, although consumers who wish to use organic products are willing to pay more for the quality of these products, it is up to the community as a whole to pay for the environmental and social role played by organic farming. Farmers practising organic farming should by consequence be offered a higher investment aid than conventional farmers, which is not the case in the current European Commission's plan. In addition, the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy adopted in 2003 did not put an end either to the flagrant injustices or to the concentration and industrialisation of agricultural production. While advocating eco-conditionality, it continues to opt for an ultra-liberal approach whose aim is constant lowering of prices.

Two-speed Policy

The Green/EFA group fears to see a two-speed policy appear, with only the rich countries being able to afford the 'luxury' of supporting their organic agriculture, while the others opt for other sectors. This could be the case in the new Member States, where organic farming is much less developed than

in the Fifteen, except in the Czech Republic and Hungary. And yet the development of organic farming, which creates jobs, and respects land and natural resources, is could also be useful as a way of maintaining family-run farms in these countries at a time when entry into the great European market holds many dangers for extremely vulnerable rural areas.

Availability, the other variable influencing customers' habits, presupposes an increase in the supply. This could be achieved by increasing the area used for organic farming and/or by improving yields. At the moment, European research on organic farming is very poor, particularly if one compares the work being done in this area with that being done on biotechnology. Research in the area of organic farming must become a European research priority.

One other fundamental priority for the development of organic farming lies, according to the Green/EFA Group, in the adoption of a clear European legislation on GMOs. This is particularly true in relation to the thorny question of coexistence. In this particular case the cost of, and responsibility for, clarification must lie with the GMO producers. It is quite out of the question that this burden should be borne by the farming world as a whole, and even less by organic farmers.

The Green/EFA group concludes that the Commission's European Action Plan does not fulfil the needs of the organic farmers. The plan lacks practical binding measures and ambition. It will not prevent fraud nor improve the effectiveness of the controls, a key element in the process of selling organic products. The Green/EFA Group states that organic farming deserves more than incentives to encourage a sectoral niche with limited aims. Instead, it should become the spearhead of a truly sustainable agricultural industry at European level, which is the aim the European Parliament must continue to support in a resolute way.

"The Commission preaches sustainability, but practises ultra-liberalism"

of our priorities is *safe, healthy and tasty food* for everyone. In order to achieve this we will continue to seek and support radical reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), with a strong reorientation towards organic farming, regional food products and rural development. This is also the way to safeguard the biodiversity of Europe's flora and fauna.

We must ensure that the consumer comes *first*, and in order to ensure safe food for all, animal rights must be safeguarded. We must also ensure that the consumer receives adequate protection by mandating correct food product labelling. Of course, Greens are always in favour of the precautionary principle, and therefore refuse genetically modified organisms in food."

In addition, the EGP adopted a resolution on GMO free zones, biodiversity and the prevention of GMO contamination during its Congress in Rome (20th-22nd of February 2004). It states that "for the European Greens, it is of utmost priority to preserve the right of producers and consumers to live free of GMO. We strictly oppose the cultivation and dissemination of GMOs in agriculture and food at the expense of traditional and organic farming. Moreover, there is no scientific evidence

Green/EFA Group has a strong impact on all legislative decisions in the field of genetic engineering. It played a powerful role in the adoption of the new legislation regarding the authorisation and labelling of GM food and the traceability of GMOs. These new rules present the strictest and most comprehensive GMO regulations worldwide.

At the initiative of the Green/EFA Group, the European Union adopted rules regarding exports of GMOs to

a clear labelling of any eventual contamination of seeds with GMOs at the detection threshold (0,1%) in order to keep the seeds clean. It underlines the right of the regions "to prohibit completely the cultivation of GMOs in geographically restricted areas so as to safeguard coexistence".

Since June 1999, when a group of Member States declared to block any new GMO marketing applications until proper legislation is in place, the Commission made several attempts to



TIME FOR ACTION!

A campaign without actions is like a bar without beer... Street actions are the best tool to make our campaign known to the broad public and to make people think about organic food and the disadvantages of GMOs.

By Joke

A team of wise persons came up with plenty of action proposals which you can read here. Of course, you can develop your own action ideas as well and send them to the Campaigning Team to put them on the campaign website (www.tellmewhatieat.net). At the launch of the campaign on September 14th, we would like every Member Organisation (MO) to participate in the same action. The closure action of the campaign should take place at the same moment in every Member Organisation as well.

Launch of the campaign

On September 14th 2005, a Europe-wide action will launch the campaign. This action will take place in every Member Organisation on the same day. The action consists of people wearing Fyeg or campaign T-shirts and MO's T-shirts asking people in the

streets questions about Organic Food and GMO's. The people get a score according to their right answers. After answering all the questions, they get a reward (always give the reward, even if they answered none of the questions correctly). The reward is a small bag of seeds with instructions on how to grow the seeds organically and with the Fyeg Campaign 'Tell me what I eat'-sticker.

This action will be more successful if you have an eye-catcher: we propose the action people to stand close to a famous statue carrying organic food (of course, it was you who put the organic food in the hands of the statue!). In Helsinki for instance, you could put organic hay in front of the horse of Mannerheim with a sign saying: 'Even Mannerheim's horse prefers organic food'. After asking the questions, you can ask people whether they don't notice anything strange with the statue. The discovery of organic food on the statue spur them into laughter. The statue with organic food will be a nice picture for the papers as well.

The questions offer a lot of possibilities: you can print them on a flyer, with the questions and answers upside down on one side and information about your MO and/or Fyeg on the other side. This is very interesting for MO's in an election campaign.

Possible questions are:

1. What are GMOs?

Genetically modified organisms, organisms in which the genetical code has been changed by crossing it with the genetic code of another organism.

2. What is organic food?

Food produced in an environmental friendly way, respecting the balance between humans, animals, plants and environment, using no pesticides, hormones, artificial fertilizers, GMOs, antibiotics).

3. How large was the area devoted to organic crops in the European agricultural landscape in 2000? 100 000 hectares, 1,3 million hectares or 4.4 million hectares?

Right answer : 4.4 million hectares.

4a. What are the advantages of GMOs? You can produce more, you don't



need pesticides, the crops are more resistant.

4b. What are the disadvantages of GMOs?

Multinationals having patents, a resistant bacterium can destroy the whole field of crops, GMOs spread via wind and insects so you can't stop them, there is no scientific proof that they are safe.

5. Can organic food feed the world?

Yes, check http://www.greens-efa.org/pdf/documents/greensefa_documents_42_en.pdf

The MO's can translate these questions or decide to compose their own questions and answers, according to the specific situation in their country. The MO's make the small bags with seeds themselves : they buy a large bag with seeds and divide this bag. In the bags, they put guidelines (in their own language) on how to grow the seeds organically. On the bags, they can put a sticker of the Fyeg campaign 'Tell me what I eat !' and of their own MO. The MO can choose for itself what seeds it wants to distribute. (guidelines on how to grow seeds organically can be found on www.tellmewhatieat.net).

Closure of the campaign

The closure of the campaign will

take place during the general assembly (GA) of Fyeg in spring 2006. The delegates at the GA will do the action where the GA takes place. At the same time, the MO's will do the same action in their respective countries. The action will be an Easter action : people wearing Fyeg (campaign) T-shirts and MO's T-shirts carry two baskets with eggs. One basket contains nicely painted organic eggs, the other basket ugly painted eggs, of which you say you don't know whether it contains GMOs or how the chickens have been treated. People in the streets can then choose which eggs they want. (It is up to the MO to decide whether you will ask a small amount of money for the eggs). On the eggs, the MO's can put small stickers with the logo and the website of the Fyeg campaign 'Tell me what I eat!'. These stickers can be found on the campaign website and printed by the MO's themselves.

Other action proposals

There are only two fixed European-wide action days. For the other actions, the MO's themselves can choose when they have them. Still, there are some interesting days for actions :

Halloween: you can go in a group to some Halloween party at your place and be dressed like a very scary vegetable, or a combination of different vegetables and animals. Try to look ugly. You wear a sign saying : 'I ate too many

GMOs', 'If you want to look like me, eat GMOs' or 'I have been genetically modified' with a sticker of the Fyeg campaign 'Tell me what I eat!'. You can also dress up like a reaper and say 'GMOs will be the death of fair food'.

The New Year's reception of your Member Organisation or any other organisation you are linked to: at the entrance of the building where the reception is, you can distribute the bags of seeds with the Fyeg campaign sticker 'Tell me what I eat !' and a leaflet explaining what our campaign is about.

Watering Can! Can I?

The European dimension of the campaign will be symbolized by a watering can : this watering can will have straps so you can wear it on your back. It will be passed on from MO to MO at every FYEG or CDN activity. The MO's can use the watering can at their actions. They can put MO's stickers on it, put a bag of seeds in it, and write a traditional recipe of their country in the cooking book that will be inside of the watering can. This cooking book can be decorated with pictures of the MO's actions as well.

MO's competition

And last but not least : FYEG organises a competition between all MO's! At the launch of the campaign, all the MO's participating in the Fyeg campaign 'Tell me what I eat !' should plant an organic seed in their office. This seed and the resulting plant should be cultivated organically. Every month, the MO sends a picture of the plant to the campaign team so it can be put on the website. This way, Fyeg can follow the evolution of the organic plants in all the MO's. At the end of the campaign (at the GA in spring 2006), an unspoiled jury will decide which plant looks nicest, and the MO who grew this plant will receive an exciting award!

Other actions

These actions can be done at any time, whenever you can't control the urge to go out on the street and get it rollin'!

Street theatres, with people dressed up like vegetables, one person dressed up as a reaper and a dead person with GMO on his costume. The MO's can invent the story themselves or find inspiration on the website www.tellmewhatieat.net.

An other idea is to organise an organic breakfast or an organic market, and invite farmers and journalists at the event. Make an organic cocktail in co-operation with organic farmers and distribute 'vitamine cocktails' on the streets, with Fyeg 'Tell me what I eat !' - leaflets and stickers.

Ask artists who like the idea of organic food the permission to distribute leaflets at their concerts. Contact someone famous in your country and ask this person to wear the Fyeg campaign T-shirt at several occasions.

An exemple of a leaflet will be available on the website www.tellmewhatieat.net in English. You can translate this leaflet to use it in your country, but you can write your own leaflet as well. The stickers can also be downloaded or ordered at the Fyeg office.

Try to look very serious, wear a suit, stand on the street and try to 'promote' GMOs in an exaggerated way. Try to convince people to become member of a 'GMO-organisation'. At the end, you tell people this was a joke and you give them a leaflet with information on the Fyeg campaign 'Tell me what I eat' and a bag of seeds.

Before MP's enter the parliament, try to catch them in front of it and give them a bag of seeds and a leaflet in their language. Do this with the green MP's as well, and at green parties' activities.

You can also install a table in your city with organic food, and let people passing by taste it. Or install two tables : a boring GMO table and a nice organic food table (with decoration and music) and let people choose at what table they want to sit.

A Treatise on the History of Food Production

Food and humans have, in the history of humankind, always been two inseparable elements: back from the days when we went out hunting and gathering fruits and vegetables, up to the present day, when we simply pick our grub out of supermarket racks. Nevertheless, the relationship between the human being and his food has changed thoroughly.

By Gert

For one, the relative number of people involved in gathering the food has diminished over the centuries. This made the growth of world population possible, though it remains to be seen whether this is a positive evolution. Technological advance has made man arrogant, and this also goes for food production. From the moment the first plough was devised, humans decided it was justifiable and desirable to change their environment, in order for it to become more fruitful. In the early times of settled farming, people sought continuously for tools that would make the never-ending torment of scratching and scraping the fields a lighter ordeal.

Throughout history, the increase of food production and the improvement of agricultural efficiency has been the cornerstone of the construction of many empires. One simple example: the civilization historians usually consider the first "civilized society": Mesopotamia, the region of the Fertile Crescent. Thanks to the two big rivers, Tigris and Euphrates, intensive irrigation was possible,

and food cultivation started flourishing. It's no coincidence that the wide-ranging opportunities this area held for ambitious food producers contained the seeds of a steep rise towards regional hegemony. The Assyrian and Babylonian rulers based their power on their successful food supply system.

The whole food distribution system was of a hierarchic nature: the people at the top of the social pyramid not only got the best stuff in the store, they also controlled the whole distribution system. In the case of the ancient Middle East, the distribution was often handled by clerics. They had good reason to keep tight control of the system: food was essential for the survival of society, and therefore one of the most valuable economic assets in society. The Egyptians, and on the other side of the Atlantic the Central-American civilizations such as the Incas and Mayas also preferred a strong central state that controlled the whole food distribution. One may actually discover some communist characteristics in these systems, though the notion of



Medieval farmers at work, as depicted by their contemporaries

what their agricultural production was supporting was thoroughly different in each of these regimes.

During Roman times, and after that during the European Middle Ages, food production more and more became a matter of money. Big farms, which were given to Roman army

veterans, latifundiae, were the main components of the Roman economic engine. Their trade lines saw food going from the countryside to the richer urban areas and luxury goods coming in return. Same

goes for the Middle Ages, although during this period of time one also had to take the specific aspects of feudality into account. The peasants, often worried by brawls between local rulers, bought themselves security from their local lord. They achieved this by paying a share of their crop as "taxes", in return for a safe haven in the castle in case of emergency.

This led to a system of husbandry that in the end proved to be unsustainable: the seemingly endless supply of human resources ended at a certain point, and the whole agricultural system went through a process of "liberalization". Albeit that the outburst of anti-feudality was the most visible and passionate in France in 1789, Britain was actually most efficient in its "liberalization".

A silent storm of change ran rampant through the British countryside, sweeping aside the traditional medi-

eval systems of social security such as the common grounds. Small peasants, whose ancestors had worked their little feudal farmyards for ages were dispossessed, if necessary by force. Rich landowners, often members of the higher nobility, added these small pieces of land to their existing properties, thus creating massive farms. The farmers that used to work these lands were now forced to become wage-labourers on the field of their expropriators, or go find their luck somewhere else, in the city.

The resulting increase of agricultural output and migration of wage-labourers led to the First Industrial Revolu-



A typical image of British enclosure: the smaller properties have been joined together to form massive estates

tion. In the 20th century, many communist regimes tried to change their agricultural system. In the USSR this was tried through a system of kolkhozes and sovkhoses, massive state-controlled farms. However, this system proved to have many flaws, mainly when it came to food distribution and maintaining productivity.

Other socialist governments around the world also attempted, often in vain, to break the back of the rural aristocracy and imply land reforms. This only goes to show that food production is a vital aspect of the world economy, and this importance has not decreased since the integration and globalization of this economy. Although food supply may seem a straightforward and not very important matter in Western eyes, it remains one of the most important occupations around the globe, and it plays a key role in worldwide economic relations.



MEP-Mail: Hiltrud Breyer

Dear European Young Greens,

Environmental and consumer protection are core subjects to Green politics. The GMO issue is part of both.

The overwhelming majority of the European consumers expresses itself against genetic food. Nevertheless, many European governments rather submit to the pressure of the genetic industry. This is dramatic for the consumer protection, because thus the Council enables the Commission to push forward on her way against consumer interests. However, the decision of the EU environmental council of 24 June 2005 not to lift the national protective clauses for the genetically modified corn Bt176 was a silver strip at the horizon. The Council has for the first time proved to have backbone and did not follow the contradictory proposal of the Commission. I hope that this is more than a most welcome first step in the right direction.

The long lasting fight may finally pay off. With the complete labeling of genetically modified food and feed from the field to the plate we succeeded a breakthrough for consumer protection. It needs to be defended against the strong Gentech-lobby. And we must continue to pressure: Urgently needed is the end of the labeling gap for animal products. Contrary to genetically changed food meat, milk, cheese, yoghurt and other products of animals which have been fed with GMOs do not have to be labeled. Therefore consumers do not have the possibility to boycott these products with the help of their "freedom of choice in the supermarket". Until this labeling gap can be closed, the processing industry should require genetically free products of its suppliers.

The Green Party succeeded in forming a majority in the European Parliament for the obligation of coexistence measures. Politically, there remains the request to the EU Commission for submitting EU-wide obligatory coexistence regulations. Until then we need a competition of the best solutions against the pollution with GMOs. The farmer's freedom of choice for a genetically free cultivation must be ensured. Genetically free technologies need to be guaranteed also in future. I therefore stand up for regional GMO-free zones. With spacious GMO-free zones we can reach out for the protection of GMO-free production on the civil-society level and at the same time carry the discussion in the public, the media, into the municipality and on the state level. Your campaign will even further contribute to these necessary discussions - I wish you lots of success.

With best regards,

Hiltrud Breyer



The luxuries of the Mesopotamian rulers all had one main source: their local kingdom's superior food production

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Special dates to keep in mind:

European-wide grand opening of the Campaign, accompanied by an action: September 14th, 2005.

Organic Food Exchange: 31st of October until 7th of November 2005, Western Ireland.

Closure of the Campaign: Fyeg General Assembly 2006.

Also, don't forget to pay our website a little visit: www.tellmewhatieat.net



Bart Staes, MEP



Find the five differences between the two photo's, and win an organic banana! Mail gert@jonggroen.be with the right answer.