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Czech Scientists Recommend Better EU Biotech Policy

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Biotechnology

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Report Highlights:

Czech scientists have published and distributed a "white paper", an EU wide recommendation for consideration for removing politics from decision making about agricultural biotechnology in Europe. Czech scientists are urging policy makers to take rational approach towards genetically modified crops, especially in case of creating legislative acts and deciding on GM crop approvals.

General Information:

Biotechnology Policy:

According the Czech Academy of Sciences, many European scientists are disturbed by the fact that political factors and ideology prevent unbiased assessments of the biotechnology in some EU countries, that negatively effect on the whole Community. Being aware of the responsibility their

country bears during the EU Presidency, Czech scientists working with biotech crops prepared a White Book summarizing their experience and analyzing relevant EU legislation. The book has been prepared in frame of EU project called MOBITAG and published by the Biology Centre ASCR. It is available as a pdf file on

<http://www.bc.cas.cz/en/MOBITAG.html>

The White Book makes the following recommendations:

1. Decisions concerning genetic modifications should not contradict scientific evidence.
2. Breeding techniques, including GM, should primarily be evaluated with respect to the outcome rather than the process itself.
3. The precautionary principle should be replaced by serious and robust risk/benefit assessment applied to all innovations in agriculture.
4. Risk assessments should always include the benefits and comparison of parallel technologies with all their components (e.g. GM crop deployment, standard agriculture with pesticides, and organic farming with permitted plant protection measures, since pesticides and even mycotoxins in organic foods present risks).
5. Economic assessments should also be done by comparison with parallel technologies.
6. If Member states are allowed to ban technology permitted elsewhere in the EU, they should also be allowed to use a technology that has not yet been approved by the EU, provided that it does not impinge on other Member states.

The White Book is also a reaction to the Council Conclusions on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) (2912th E_VIRO_ME_T Council meeting Brussels, 4 December 2008), which “welcomes the Commission's mandate to the European Food Safety Authority to undertake a revision exercise started in March 2008 and to be completed no later than March 2010 regarding its guidelines on environmental risk assessment; calls for this work to be carried out if possible before March 2010, providing that this does not influence the quality of the consultation process; invites the Member States to ensure full participation of their competent scientific bodies in the consultation EFSA will undertake during the revision process, by offering their contribution on the project within the required time frame”. Czech scientists would like to participate and contribute to the process and their recommendations are available in the white book.