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How is it possible that, despite continued opposition to GM products by the vast majority of consumer and despite the adoption of GM-free policies by most of the leading EU retailers and food companies, millions of tons of GM crops are entering the European food chain unnoticed each year? The answer is simple, eggs, meat and dairy products coming from animals fed with GM feed are not subject to labelling requirements in the EU.

Under EU rules, products derived from GM ingredients must be labelled as containing GMOs. However, this does not apply to food produced from animals fed with GMOs.

This is a major loophole in the legislation and has led to the current situation: where 90% of GM crops imported into the EU each year are destined for animal feed. Thus some 20 million tonnes of GMOs enter the EU food chain in a totally invisible manner.

I don't need to remind this audience of the reasons not to feed animals with GMOs.

GM crops have been found to have unintended health effects on test animals. A 10-year study in Australia found that mice fed GE peas developed lung inflammation, while a 90-day study by Monsanto found that rats fed GM maize MON863 developed kidney and liver abnormalities and changes in blood cell quality. Antibiotic resistance marker genes used in some GMOs can provoke tolerance to antibiotics, undermining the efficacy of medicines. The high degree of scientific uncertainty over the safety of GM crops means that unpredictable and unexpected effects on human and animal health cannot be ruled out, particularly in the long term.

Besides health impacts, GM crops are recognised to have detrimental environmental impacts, on biodiversity, the development of super-weeds and pest resistance. GM crops enhance the resistance of weeds to herbicides and of pests to pesticides, leading to an increased need for herbicides and pesticides and greater dependency of farmers on agro-chemical companies. Insect-resistant GM crops are known to reduce numbers of butterflies and other beneficial insects, as well as weeds and soil organisms.

Massive production of soy meal (the single most important animal feed in Europe) from Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay has caused major ecological and social harm. Deforestation, soil and water pollution, soil erosion, biodiversity reduction, increased food prices and displacement of farmers are just some of the problems caused by the huge expansion of (GM) soy monoculture. In Argentina this has resulted in a sharp decline of traditional food crops such as maize and wheat and in many small farmers being driven from their land.

Given the social, environmental and safety issues surrounding animal feed, Greenpeace is campaigning for greater market demand for GM-free feed and for closing the loophole in EU labelling law.

In February, Greenpeace delivered to Markos Kyprianou, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, a petition signed by more than 1,000,000 citizens calling for the labelling of milk, meat, eggs and other animal products where the animals have been fed with genetically modified organisms. Greenpeace called on the European Commission to stop letting GMOs enter the European market through a loophole in

the law and argued for European citizens to be granted the right to choose for themselves whether to eat food from animals fed with GMOs.

The draft EU Constitution grants one million EU citizens the right to call for legislation on key principles enshrined in the Constitution: the right to information is one of these principles.

Commissioner Kyprianou declared that the Commission would take the petition into account and look into the matter, nothing has resulted. More political pressure is therefore required.

A campaign on animal feed is becoming increasingly crucial for the following six reasons.

1) Four years after the new EU labelling law was adopted, surveys show consumers want more than ever to be informed about what they eat and reject GM animal feed just as strongly as GMOs in food. 94.6% of Europeans want the right to choose whether or not to eat GMO food, over 60% of them would refuse to buy eggs from chickens fed GM maize and 95% of Swedish consumers declared that they want meat products from GMO-fed animals to be labelled.

2) Currently, most of the largest EU food and drinks brands as well as EU food retailers have adopted GM-free policies and some of them have taken voluntary steps to guarantee consumers meat and dairy products deriving from non-GM fed animals. Marks & Spencer, Carrefour, Coop Italia and McDonald's (in Europe) are among those companies. In response to the demand from retailers, NGOs and the public, many other dairy and meat producers in the EU have switched to non-GM feeding practices. Most Italian and German poultry industry and the top three dairy companies in Greece, as well as 80% of Austria's dairy industry have phased out GM feed. However, even if these results are extremely encouraging many other European food producers do not guarantee the use of non-GM animal feed for the production of meat and dairy produce. Much more pressure is therefore needed to convince the bulk of the European meat and dairy industry to implement non-GM feed policies.

3) The offer of GM-free soybeans from Brazil (28 million tonnes a year) can meet a good part of EU consumption needs (45 million tonnes). However, the constant increase of GM soybeans cultivation in Brazil (up from 5% in 1996 to 45% in 2007) is a worrying trend, and makes the increase of the European demand for GM-free soy seriously urgent. Slowing down, stopping and reversing the current trend in the cultivation of GM soybeans in Brazil is still possible but will depend almost exclusively on the greater European demand for GM-free soy.

4) The growing prevalence of contamination scandals reveals that animal feed shipments offer the best chance for the "contamination strategy" pursued by pro-GM administrations (mainly the U.S.) and biotech companies.

5) All farmers, meat and dairy companies, food retailers and producers are aware, thanks to the existing labelling regulations, if animals are eating GM crops. They have no excuse left not to pass this information on to consumers.

6) Finally and most importantly: GMO-free crop and food production in Europe is possible only if cultivation of GM crops is stopped at source. Since the European Union is the largest importer of (GM) animal feed, a shift in import demands is the only way to drive change in the world market and, eventually, bring about a GM free future.

To achieve this objective we need a broad movement to exercise the necessary pressure on EU institutions and national governments as well as on food companies.

Market and political work are both essential elements of a successful campaign. Civil society must call on European and national institutions to grant citizens their right to information by closing the loophole in the EU labelling law. At the same time, food retailers and producers must be urged to put in place solutions that respond to the demands of citizens and NGOs. Here, the most effective way to proceed is by calling on meat and dairy companies and food retailers to adopt 'positive' labelling systems, since this is likely to encourage competitors to do the same.

It should be added that the most sustainable way to tackle problems linked to animal feed is for farmers to grow their own feed, or to buy it locally. This also means rethinking animal diets by favouring the supply of domestically produced vegetable proteins. Many ecological and social problems caused by the expansion of monoculture could this way be prevented.

I look forward to hearing comments and reactions from the audience and invite those individuals, organisations, regions and municipalities that are interested in this challenging campaign to come to speak to me after the end of the conference. In this way we could have the chance to discuss together how to join forces and to further proceed in the development of an effective strategy that would lead to GM-free feed in Europe. Rolling back the use of GM animal feed would be a major step forward in achieving a GM free future, but only if we contribute together to this goal we will be able to secure a real change.