

European GMO-free Regions Network Declaration on Labels and GM-free Farming • 5 February 2010

BRUSSELS — The European GMO-Free Regions Network — which includes 51 Regional Governments across the single market— is pleased to report on the success of its *Third Conference on Non-GM Labels, Quality Productions and European Regional Agricultures' Strategy* held here on 3-4 February 2010.

Hosted by the EU Committee of the Regions, the event was organised in collaboration with the Association of European Regions for Products of Origin (AREPO), Slow Food International, and the European Parliamentary groups Greens / European Free Alliance, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, and Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. Participants included several hundred delegates from the European Union, Norway, Switzerland, USA, Brazil, India, and Ukraine.

The conference spotlighted rapidly growing consumer demand and a fully-committed global market for Non-GMO labeled animal feed and food. It reviewed the national GM-free labelling regulations established by Austria and Germany, and those soon to be implemented by France and Ireland. It also reported on some hundred food producers and food brands and over 700,000 farmers who now supply certified Non-GM food, including meat, poultry, eggs, fish and dairy produce made without the use of GM animal feed.

The European GMO-Free Regions Network is thrilled by the global response to our members' concerns. Brazilian producers set up the ABRANGE group to co-ordinate their production and distribution of GM-free soya in 2008. We have been invited to participate in the first Indian conference on GM-free soya production to be held on 16-17 March 2010 in New Delhi. We are also delighted by the various Groups of the European Parliament who adopted our Regions objectives and organised the parliamentary discussion on "GM-free products: An economic opportunity for European producers" in November 2009.

The GM-Free Regions Network is particularly satisfied by the progress achieved since our first mission to Brazil in 2005 and the organisation of our first international conference on GM-free soya in 2007:

- ❖ GMO contamination of seeds, feed and food is increasingly recognised both an impediment to trade and a strategic threat for the environmental, economic, social and territorial sustainability of the European Regions and of their businesses and consumers.
- ❖ The world's main producers of GM-free soya have now organised themselves and eliminated the threat of a shortage of this vital commodity for many industries.
- ❖ In response to European market demand, GM-free production in Brazil and the USA has stopped decreasing overall and increased in some areas. India has banned the cultivation of GM soya. Austria, Germany, Hungary, France, Bulgaria and Switzerland have banned the cultivation of GM maize. And 14 EU Member States have called for the European Commission to recognise the right of all Member States to establish blanket bans on GM crops in their territories.
- ❖ Several EU Member States have already introduced national regulations for GM-free labeling of food including meat, poultry, eggs, fish and dairy produce made without the use of GM animal feed.
- ❖ A growing number of Government and business sectors are working to reduce their dependence on imported vegetable proteins as part of their strategic policies for Food Security, Food Sovereignty, Food Safety, Social Responsibility, Quality Agriculture, Environment, Landscape, Biodiversity, Fair Trade, Sustainable Development, and Climate Change.
- ❖ There is an emerging European consensus for reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to protect the competitiveness, food safety and social responsibility of Europe's agri-food sectors by defending the capacity to maintain the resilience, diversity, authenticity, traditions, and territorial relationships of food production.

The European GMO-Free Regions Network urges its institutional partners —including the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions— to implement the following recommendations expressed by the conference participants:

- ❖ The European Commission and Parliament should carry out a transparent public in-depth investigation to ensure the continued supply of affordable GM-free animal feedstuffs:
 - *The Commission and Parliament should develop a specific policy on the related needs of stakeholder in this regard.*
- ❖ Consumers demand full transparency from farm to plate, including full information on the presence or absence of any GMOs involved in the production of and/or contained in animal produce:
 - *The consumer's right to information required for freedom of choice must be respected by the introduction of EU-wide mandatory labeling for animal produce made with or without GMOs, and the use of quality assurance schemes.*
- ❖ The time has come to re-examine the European Union's capacity to produce GM-free animal feedstuffs:
 - *EU Member States should adopt and implement a GM-free plant protein production policy at EU level, and include this requirement in bilateral trade relations with the USA, India, China, Africa, and the MERCOSUR.*

The European GMO-Free Regions Network *requests the inclusion of all these points in the revised Common Agricultural policy, so as to position European agriculture as the world-class best practice of sustainable development for others to follow, and to help alleviate the North-South development gap, local food scarcity, malnutrition and hunger.*

The European GMO-Free Regions Network undertakes to:

- ❖ Promote the efforts of private and public labels to defend the economic value of their quality food production standards;
- ❖ give substance to and reinforce the implementation of sustainable agriculture to reconcile producers and consumers and to protect the environment for future generations;
- ❖ leverage the work of the European Regions — which are the best defenders of their territorial interests because of their local institutional nature and stakeholder proximity — to influence and contribute to the work of national and European authorities on the future of food and farming.