

## Press Release: European Network of GM Free Regions

### **The rights of consumers and organic farmers must not be ignored by EU Agriculture Ministers – debate over GM contamination of organic food rages**

The Finnish EU presidency is seeking to reach final agreement on the amount of GM contamination allowable in organic products at the December Agriculture and Fisheries Council meeting.

Current EU legislation prohibits the use of GMOs in organic production but the Commission has proposed that an adventitious or technically unavoidable GM presence of up to 0.9% should be allowed in organic products.

All 40 members of the European Network of GM Free Regions are extremely concerned at this development and call on Agriculture Ministers to act responsibly by keeping GM out of the growing EU organic sector.

Susanna Cenni, Tuscany Region Minister for Agriculture and current President of the Network, said: *“Introducing GM contamination into organic systems is irresponsible and cannot be in the best interest of the sector. Surveys show that European consumers do not want to eat genetically modified food\* and this proposal runs contrary to their wishes. The Network of GM Free Regions believes that Agriculture Ministers have the ideal opportunity reflect the consistent views of EU consumers when they vote at the Agriculture Council meeting in December. Ministers must safeguard consumers’ rights to eat GM free food and recognise the years of investment that have created our thriving European organic industry”*.

#### **Further Information**

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#### **Notes for Editors**

- \* <http://www.ec.europa.eu/research/press/2006/pr1906en.cfm>
- The European Network of GM Free Regions was established in November 2003 in response to the European Commission’s recommendation of 23 July 2003 on guidelines for the development of national strategies and best practice for the development of national strategies for the coexistence of GM crops with conventional and organic farming.
- The European Network of GM Free Regions aims to preserve farmers’ rights to grow organic and non-GM crops and consumers rights to reject GM food.
- Minimum standards for organic production are laid down in EU Regulation 2092/91. This Regulation prohibits the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the organic process, except in the case of veterinary medicinal products. Buying organic food is the only way consumers can currently avoid eating GM food.
- Conventionally produced food and animal feed may contain up to 0.9% GM material without being labelled as a GM product. By encouraging organic producers to rely on the labels on their inputs the European Commission proposal would allow organic food to contain up to 0.9% accidental GM contamination – almost one in a hundred mouthfuls – without being labelled.