

Genetically modified organisms GMOs: deliberate release into the environment (repeal. Directive 90/220/EEC)

1998/0072(COD) - 21/03/2000

The committee adopted the recommendation for second reading (codecision procedure) by David BOWE (PES, UK) with a large number of amendments to the Council's common position. The debate in committee focused on the dangers of the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) into the environment. One of the amendments adopted by the committee refused authorisation for the release of GMOs containing antibiotic-resistant genes, even for research. The Council's common position only envisaged taking such GMOs "into particular consideration when carrying out an environmental risk assessment" and had not accepted a similar amendment from Parliament's first reading. The other amendments focused mainly on: - environmental liability: the committee called for the party legally responsible for a deliberate release to bear strict civil liability for any damage to human health and the environment; - exports of GMOs outside the EU: GMOs should not leave EU territory without the prior consent of the importing country, which should be informed of the authorisation procedure in the EU; - socio-economic costs and benefits: environmental risk assessment should be strengthened through a yearly study on socio-economic costs and benefits of proposed deliberate releases; this risk assesment, which should be carried out before submitting a notification for a release, should also include the evaluation of risks to animal or plant health and public or private property; - the Biosafety Protocol: this protocol, drawn up in Montreal in January 2000, had not yet been ratified, but the committee asked for it to be taken into account and for the directive to be further amended and clarified in the context of the protocol.