

Genetically modified food and feed

2001/0173(COD) - 04/06/2002

The committee adopted the report by Karin SCHEELE (PES, D) tabling a large number of amendments to the proposal under the codecision procedure (1st reading) with the aim of toughening up the regulation. It pointed out that the GMO Release Directive (2001/18/EC) provided for the possibility of setting a maximum threshold for the accidental presence in food or feed of authorised GMOs, whereas the proposed regulation was putting forward a threshold for non-authorised GMOs. The committee argued that this would undermine EU legislation on biosafety. It therefore amended and restructured the regulation so as to ensure that the threshold for accidental contamination would apply only to GMOs authorised in the Community and would be 0.5% (rather than 1% as proposed by the Commission). MEPs also deleted the article in the proposal providing for Directive 2001/18/EC to be amended so as to incorporate the specific threshold for accidental contamination. They argued that it made no sense to alter a directive which was adopted only recently (2001) following a complicated conciliation procedure with the Council, and that the new regulation should complement that directive instead. The committee also wanted the precautionary principle to be expressly enshrined in the regulation and amended the introductory article accordingly. It further stipulated that Member States should be in a position to take rapid decisions and apply the precautionary principle on their territory in the event of force majeure, rather than merely informing the European Food Safety Authority and the Commission and waiting for the latter to take emergency measures. Member States should therefore be entitled to take emergency measures themselves in the event of a severe risk or where they received new information giving them grounds to suspect that the use of a food or feed posed a danger to human or animal health or the environment. As regards the scope of the regulation, the committee also wanted it to apply to food derived from animals fed at any stage on genetically-modified feed. This information should be clearly stated on the product label. Other amendments sought to make labelling clearer, for example by ensuring that the print was sufficiently large and easy to read. Lastly, the committee adopted a number of amendments concerning the public's right to information, including a caveat that certain information should remain confidential so as not to harm an applicant's competitive position.