Resolution on the draft Commission implementing decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of, or produced from genetically modified cotton GHB119 (BCS-GHØØ5-8)

2017/2675(RSP) - 17/05/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 425 votes to 230, with 27 abstentions, a resolution on the draft Commission implementing decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of, or produced from genetically modified cotton GHB119 (BCS-GHØØ5-8) pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

The resolution was tabled by the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety.

Parliament considered that the authorisation for import of genetically modified cotton GHB119 into the Union would undoubtedly lead to an increase in its cultivation in other parts of the world, with a corresponding increase in the use of glufosinate ammonium-based herbicide (to which cotton is resistant) and classified as toxic to reproduction.

Issues of concern: Members stressed that independent research raised concerns about major gaps in the comparative assessment, as well as the toxicology assessment. They recalled that many critical comments were submitted by Member States during the three-month consultation period. Those comments referred to, inter alia: (i) missing data as regards identification and quantification of the herbicide and metabolite residues in the GM plants and seeds used for food/feed, (ii) shortcomings in the environmental risk assessment, (iii) missing data as regards the germination power of the imported seed, as well as the fact that no unintended effects were taken into consideration.

In spite of all the above mentioned concerns, the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) did not consider any post-market monitoring of food/feed derived from cotton GHB119 to be necessary.

Procedural aspects: Parliament recalled that since the entry into force of Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003, authorisation decisions have been adopted by the Commission without the support of the Member States committee opinion. Therefore, returning the dossier to the Commission for final decision, which is very much the exception for the procedure as a whole, has become the norm for decision-making on genetically modified food and feed authorisations.

In its resolution of 28 October 2015, Parliament rejected, at first reading, the legislative proposal of 22 April 2015 amending Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 and called on the Commission to withdraw it and submit a new one.

On the basis of these considerations, Parliament considered that the draft Commission implementing decision is not consistent with Union law, which is to provide the basis for ensuring a high level of protection of human life and health, animal health and welfare, the environment and consumer interests in relation to genetically modified food and feed, whilst ensuring the effective functioning of the internal market.

Therefore, Parliament called on the Commission to withdraw its draft implementing decision and suspend any implementing decision regarding applications for authorisation of genetically modified organisms until the authorisation procedure has been revised in such a way as to address the shortcomings of the current procedure, which has proven inadequate.