

GMO Free Regions 2015

Governments, Business, Scientists and Civil Society gather in Berlin

Ten years after the first European GMO Free Regions conference took place in Berlin over 60 regional governments and hundreds of companies and their associations, science groups and civil society organizations will meet on May 6-8 2015 again.

It is certainly time to celebrate enormous successes – With more than 60 regional governments within Europe united as Network of GMO Free Regions, hundreds of additional subregional entities and municipalities, farmers declared GMO Free areas and thousands of enterprises guaranteeing their products to be free of genetically modified ingredients, including also animal products, this movement has really changed the markets and the policies within the European Union and well beyond. GMO Free Regions have now been established and declared on all continents of the world, and their numbers are growing.

GMO Free regions prove to be an ecological and economic win-win strategy: They trigger sustainable and integrated efforts towards less toxic and wasteful production and shorter supply chains and hold enormous opportunities to create added value and decent jobs at local and regional level.

It is also time to discuss joint strategies regarding some major challenges ahead:

- Europe needs a coherent protein plant strategy in order to overcome its dependence on soybean imports, most of which are genetically engineered. Such a strategy will not only fulfil the GMO Free mission of farmers and agricultural producers. It will also help addressing serious issues of soil nutrients, agro-biodiversity and climate gas emissions and create new opportunities for rural development.
- A so called “Opt out” revision of present EU GMO legislation is certainly a political tribute to the fact that a vast majority of European citizens rejects GMOs in the food as well as on their fields. However, the legislation proposed by EU ministers would rather jeopardize GMO Free Europe than promote it.
- “Low level presence” of GMOs in products and seed as well as other attempts to erode clear and reliable labelling and purity measures are proposed at global level
- Bilateral agreements such as those of Europe with Canada (Ceta) and the United States (ttip) are under massive corporate pressure and will eventually be used to lower existing standards, to unduly influence future legislation and expose democratic decision making an legislation at European and national as well as regional level on sides of the Atlantic to private legal challenges and claims for compensation.
- Corporate pressure on scientists and media and a global PR Strategy suggesting that GMO were needed to sustainably feed the world and to address climate change and biodiversity loss must beg for joint rebuttal and efforts to counter disinformation, corruption of scientific institutions and media and mobbing of critical scientists.

All these issues will be presented and discussed in Berlin from 6 to 8 May 2015, when for the first time the three pillars of GMO Free Europe – regional governments, GMO Free Businesses, science groups and NGOs – will jointly organize a three day conference, also inviting friends and colleagues from around the world. Their common goals are not restricted in the protection from dangers and risks of GMOs, but extend to a joint, sustainable and holistic approach to food, agriculture, biodiversity and health.