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Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

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DRAFT REPORT

With changes added in by FoEE after voting, TBC when final version published

Adopted amendments are in **yellow**, with the name of the MEP that tabled it in brackets. Any notes from FoEE are coloured in **turquoise**.

on Biotechnology: Prospects and Challenges for Agriculture in Europe
(2006/2059(INI))

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

Rapporteur: Kyösti Virrankoski

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on Biotechnology: Prospects and Challenges for Agriculture in Europe (2006/2059(INI))

The European Parliament,

-1. - having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community,(Aita)

Ia. - having regard to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which was adopted by the 31st FAO Conference in Roma on 3 November 2001 through Resolution 3/2001 and signed by the European Union on 6 June 2002 and which recognises and provides for the implementation of Farmers' Rights,(Aita)

Ib. - having regard to Directive 98/95/EC of 14 December 1998, amending Council Directives 2002/54/EC, 66/401/EEC, 66/402/EEC, 2002/56/EC, 2002/57/EC, 2002/53/EC and 2002/55/EC, which introduced a legal basis enabling genetic variability, which is threatened by genetic erosion, to be protected as soon as the seed is marketed, (Aita) NOTE: Virrankoski separated the vote into 2 votes first half was accepted and the second half (which is barred) was rejected!

- having regard to the Commission Communication on Life Sciences and Biotechnology - a Strategy for Europe¹,
- having regard to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity of 29 January 2000², signed by the European Community on 24 May 2000,
- having regard to the Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the seventh framework programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007 to 2013) (COM(2005)0119),
- having regard to Directive 2001/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 March 2001 on the deliberate release into the environment of genetically modified organisms and repealing Council Directive 90/220/EEC³,
- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2003 on genetically modified food and feed⁴ and to Regulation (EC) No 1830/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2003 concerning the traceability and labelling of genetically modified organisms and the traceability of food and feed products produced from genetically modified organisms and amending Directive 2001/18/EC⁵,

¹ OJ C 55, 2.3.2002, p. 3.

² OJ L 201, 31.7.2002, p. 50.

³ OJ L 106, 17.4.2001, p. 1. Directive as last amended by Decision 2002/623/EC (OJ L 200, 30.7.2002, p. 22).

⁴ OJ L 268, 18.10.2003, p. 1.

⁵ OJ L 268, 18.10.2003, p. 24.

- having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the report on the implementation of national measures on the coexistence of genetically modified crops with conventional and organic farming (COM(2006)0104),
- having regard to its resolution of 15 March 2001 on the Future of the Biotechnology Industry¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 21 November 2002 on the Commission Communication on Life Sciences and Biotechnology - a Strategy for Europe²,
- having regard to its resolution of 18 December 2003 on coexistence between genetically modified crops and conventional and organic crops³,
- having regard to Rule 45 of the Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (A6-0000/2006),

~~A. whereas modern biotechnology is one of the leading new technologies that is likely to develop tremendously over the next few years and has huge economic, commercial, social and environmental implications in Europe and globally,~~

Aa. whereas the biotechnology sector includes several fields of research concerning agriculture, the environment and food, and whereas biotechnologies also concern many fields other than GMOs, including those concerning the use of biomass (from agriculture, forestry and organic waste), biomolecules and microbial genomes, it should in the coming years develop as part of a global approach to sustainable development, with economic, social, environmental and health implications in Europe and globally, (compromise amendment proposed by Virrankoski)

B. whereas the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies both aim to steer Europe towards sustainable development based on dynamic growth that ensures more jobs, increased social cohesion and greater respect for the environment by 2010 and a modern agricultural sector with market-oriented production could serve as a major contributor to achieving this; innovation, research and development activities in various sectors of biotechnology could contribute towards that sustainable development objective, (compromise amendment proposed by Virrankoski)

Ba. whereas no mechanism has been set up to detect and protect against unauthorised transgenics, and the food chain may be contaminated with other illegal transgenics which have not yet been detected because the analytical methods necessary to detect them are not yet available, (Figueiredo)

¹ OJ C 343, 5.12.2001, p. 292.

² OJ C 25 E, 29.1.2004, p.384.

³ OJ C 91 E, 15.4.2004, p.680.

~~B. whereas the Lisbon Strategy, which aims to make Europe more dynamic and competitive, sets as targets an average economic growth of 3% and the creation of 20 million jobs by 2010 and modern biotechnology could serve as a major contributor to achieving European Union policy goals on growth, competitiveness and job creation,~~

C. whereas developments in biotechnology have the potential to yield many benefits for agriculture, such as increased yields, reduced use of herbicides and pesticides, less fossil fuel use and reduced soil erosion,

-C. whereas the development and use of agricultural biotechnology offer an opportunity to develop both economically and environmentally sustainable farming and food production, (Ayuso)

Cb. whereas advances made in biotechnology have the potential to create new openings for agriculture and silviculture and, more broadly, to contribute to a better use of all biomass from renewable sources; and whereas these innovations concern the fields of green chemistry, food and health, (Le Foll, Miguelez Ramos)

Cd. whereas there is a growing demand for healthier, safer and higher-quality food, at the same time taking account of animal welfare and rural conservation, (Ayuso)

D. whereas the mid-term review shows that **(deletion)** progress has been made towards achieving the goals set in “Life Sciences and Biotechnology — A strategy for Europe” with respect to establishing regulatory principles and promoting a strong public life sciences research base and healthcare applications; whereas progress towards the specific goals established for the agricultural biotechnology applications is lagging behind these achievements **and so far is not very tangible (Ferreira, Bourzai, Patrie, Vergnaud),**

E. whereas **(deletion)** Community legislation is **interpreted differently by different Member States and its implementation is therefore** not consistent across all Member States; **whereas** there is a clear need to develop a common approach, particularly with regard to coexistence between genetically modified crops and conventional and organic crops which provides the basis for choice for both farmers and consumers, (Golik)

E.

F. whereas GM products for use in agriculture necessarily have to pass very stringent assessments and the present authorisation process is slow and bureaucratic, contributing to the EU lagging behind its global competitors,

G. whereas modern biotechnology ~~can~~ **could** help to respond to the challenges brought about by poverty, population growth and changing environmental conditions in the developing world, (Gklavakis)

Ga. whereas the use of new technologies, for example in new crops for medicinal purposes or non-food production, offers new production opportunities, particularly

in sectors where conventional production has ceased to be economically profitable, (Ayuso)

~~H. whereas the EU strongly wants to increase the share of renewable energy in its energy consumption and bioenergy presents challenging opportunities,~~

H. whereas *bioenergy offers the possibility of increasing the share of renewable energy in overall EU energy consumption, which is a strategic goal in the Union, and some energy crops can present* challenging opportunities, (Virrankoski compromise amendment)

Ha. *whereas the success of the production of second-generation biomass-based biofuels is conditional on support for biotechnological research into processing,*(Ayuso)

I. whereas 90 million hectares of GM crops were grown worldwide in 2005 and this hectareage is **expected to increase** in the following years, **while the area under GM cultivation in the EU is comparatively low, in the region of 65 000 hectares** (Mc Guinness),

Ia. *whereas there must be no discrimination against genetically modified organisms by comparison with conventional crops,* (Sommer)

Ib. *whereas farmers in the EU have a right to benefit from advances in modern biotechnoogy in exactly the same way as farmers in third states,* (Sommer)

General

1. **Encourages efforts to develop biotechnologies in the EU as one way of *making agriculture viable and liveable, and takes the view that these biotechnologies facilitate the development of sustainable methods of production;*** increased yield and higher quality and more diverse products with less use of nitrates and other fertilisers and rational use of water ; underlines the necessity ***that conventional and organic agriculture has to remain successful on its markets; points out that the use of new methods in agriculture must be geared first and foremost to market demand if this is to secure the sustained viability of agricultural holdings*** (Virrankoski compromise amendment)

Ia. *Understands that biotechnology has different meanings for different people; it encompasses a collection of scientific techniques that are used to create or modify plants, animals and organisms, which can range from brewing to modern day transgenic plants; for the purpose of this resolution, the term biotechnology is used to define the application of scientific technology to living organisms as well as parts, products and models thereof, in order to alter living or non-living materials for the production of knowledge, goods and services; it is a body of methods and techniques*

that employ as tools the living cells of organisms or part or products of those cells (such as genes and enzymes); biotechnology includes modern biotechnology techniques such as genetic engineering technology, but does not exclusively relate to transgenic technology, which is used to create genetically modified organisms;(McGuinness)

1b. *Calls on the Commission and Member States to support research on biotechnology applications offering clear social or environmental benefits, including the development of genetically modified micro-organisms for water purification, land regeneration, the replacement of hazardous chemical substances currently in use and the development of sustainable and environmentally favourable energy sources (including biogas, hydrogen and second-generation biofuels);*

1c emphasises the importance of biotechnology for the future of sustainable agriculture, for example in developing bioenergy, substitutes for oil products such as plastics and new sustainable methods for growing crops; stresses therefore that more agricultural funds must be allocated out of the CAP to the biotechnology sector, including funds for the education of farmers about the possibilities of biotechnology within the framework of sustainable agriculture. (From INTA committee)

2. Considers it important to acknowledge that biotechnology could present real opportunities in various fields; believes that beyond the traditional agricultural products of food, feed and fibre, entirely novel products for agriculture will emerge, including pharmaceutical products such as oral vaccines, products with higher levels of essential amino acid or vitamins, improved fatty acid content and the removal of allergens and anti-nutrients; (McGuinness and Gklavakis)

2a. *Notes that over 50 per cent of citizens believe that biotechnology will improve their quality of life (Eurobarometer survey 2005) but that the public is still mostly sceptical about agricultural (green) biotechnology, and will continue to be so unless new crops and products are seen to have consumer benefits;* (McGuinness)

3. ~~Is convinced~~ Believes that biotechnology applications can may help to reduce the use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers in crop cultivation, thus contributing to the protection of the environment and of human health; (Mc Guinness)

3b. *Observes the need to enhance and broaden public debate, access to objective information and the improvement of the level of scientific knowledge; considers that it is the responsibility of policy-makers, as well as industry, the scientific community and non-governmental organisations, to communicate to citizens in a clear and transparent manner the benefits and risks of biotechnology;* (McGuinness)

3c. *Notes that the EU is a major importer of GM soya in particular; and Member States who do not grow GM crops do use imported GM feed*

ingredients;(McGuiness)

3d. Urges that more public ownership of the ownership of research into biotechnology be promoted; regrets that to date the debate about GM foods has been unduly polarised; (McGuiness) NOTE: vote split in two, first half of proposed amendment rejected (text barred) second half adopted

4. Considers that the replacement of non-renewable raw materials with new products of fine chemicals and a large variety of degradable materials offers new opportunities; **research and development can find ways to improve wood and fibre structures and create new possibilities for renewable products, replacing non-renewable raw materials;** (Virrankoski)

4a. Appeals to the Member States to guarantee the right of all people producing conventional crops not to be contaminated by GMOs and to guarantee the right of all consumers to choose between food products without GMO technology and food products with GMO technology; (Figueiredo)

4b. **considers that by promoting the use of agricultural products for non-food purposes (such as raw materials in pharmaceutical and other industries), biotechnology offers additional outlets for farmers, and helps the European agricultural sector to comply with WTO obligations;** (INTA committee amendment)

4c. **is of the opinion that the impact of biotechnology on the economics of production of and trade in agricultural products must be assessed in a broad manner, including the possible effects on non-biotech agri-food production, the possible impact of biotechnology on the economics of current and future non-food production such as biomass and biofuels, biodegradable packaging, medicinal products, etc.; supports an ambitious European research policy in the area of biofuels and, more generally, biomass use, which is of key importance in the present energy context, allowing the EU to boost its exports and limit its imports in order to improve the EU's trade balance;** (INTA committee amendment)

5. **Emphasises the need to work to ensure that in the near future an increased variety of better and healthier food and feedstuffs could be produced also in less favoured areas, in restricted climate conditions, in dry or moist conditions and on harsh soil, and notes that the correct use of biotechnology could be one of the keys** to these developments; (Virrankoski)

compromise amendment)

-5bis. Considers that biotechnology is a means of obtaining new plant varieties and animal breeds that are resistant to certain diseases, adapt to adverse climate conditions such as drought or extreme temperatures, and help combat climate change;(Ayuso)

6. Supports the view that biotechnologies may offer attractive alternatives to energy production in rural areas and that biomass, biogas and biofuels **can help in the diversification of the energies required for use in** heating, electricity production and **transport**, thus increasing income in rural areas **emphasises that these possibilities should be considered in the light of the overriding considerations of food safety and supply, protection of health and the environment, and management of the countryside**

(Le Foll, Miguelez Ramos, McGuinness, Bourzai, Patrie, Vergnaud, Berman)

7. Calls on the Commission to establish a high level group of the Commission, Council and European Parliament **with transparent membership and work programmes to which all stakeholders (such as scientists, industry, farmers, consumers and environmentalists) would be invited to contribute in an equal manner** to plan a strategy on biotechnology for agriculture in the EU **that takes into account the environmental and socio-economic diversity of the States and regions of the European Union; calls for the work of that high level-group regularly to be made public and also for its composition to be made public;(Ferreira, Bourzai, Patrie, Vergnaud, Berman, Batzeli) NOTE: this is infact a combination of two amendments that were both adopted reads strangely**

a.

Legislative framework

8. Regrets the current complexity of the approval of new biotechnology products and doubts that practices based on the existing procedure are always justified only by objective scientific criteria and not rather by political positions; points out that other factors than protecting human health and the environment should be clearly identified and separated from other aspects in the approval process;

8b. Supports the current precautionary approach to the approval of new biotechnology products and accepts that practices based on the existing procedure cannot always be justified by objective scientific criteria, and points out that socio-economic factors, as well as the protection of human health and the environment, should be considered as part of the approval process;(Berman)

9. Stresses the decisive importance of protecting human health and the environment in the approval process and underlines the use of objective scientific criteria in this respect; points out that the precautionary principle cannot be used as an excuse to delay the process; NOT SURE WHETHER THIS TEXT WAS REJECTED AND IF SO WHAT IMPACT ON 8b. AM CHECKING WITH GREENS.

9b. Calls on the Commission to put forward a proposal establishing workable and proportionate labelling thresholds for the adventitious presence of EU-approved GM seeds in non-GM seeds; (McGuinness)

10. Notes the Commission's recent report on the implementation of national measures on the coexistence of genetically modified crops with conventional and organic farming and urges better harmonisation of rules and conditions within the EU; emphasises the importance of farmers having the right to choose between traditional, organic and GMO production and therefore the need for establishing clear, uniform and transparent coexistence measures that enable GM farmers to coexist with neighbours using different farming methods; (Berman)

10a. Calls for all holdings whose 'GM free' quality label has given them a higher-priced market to be safeguarded by adequate and clearly defined coexistence measures against contamination from genetically modified organisms and for the market position they have won, and hence their economic stability, not to be jeopardised;

(Graefe zu Baringdorf)

stresses that there is a need for common labelling rules and better consumer information in conformity with WTO rules; (INTA amendment)

10b. Calls on the Commission, within the framework already established in Commission Recommendation 2003/556/EC on the co-existence of genetically modified crops with conventional and organic farming, to provide more detailed guidelines, on a crop-by-crop basis, of the co-existence measures which Member States may take without going beyond what is proportionate; (McGuinness)

11. Asks for clarification of liability for damages incurred in the growing and use of biotechnological products: who is liable, what can be claimed and under what circumstances a claim can be made; in emphasising the importance of proportionality and fair play, considers that overly stringent rules can create real obstacles to the use of biotechnological inventions; (Ferreira, Bourzai, Patrie, Vergnaud)

11a. - having regard to the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Austrian Presidency Conference on the Co-existence of genetically modified, conventional and organic crops held in Vienna on 4-6 April 2006, and the subsequent recommendations from the Agriculture Council in May 2006, that the Commission must develop a

proposal establishing labelling thresholds for the adventitious presence of approved GM seeds in non-GM seeds, (Mc Guinness)

Research and development

12. Calls on the Commission and Member States to promote research and development in the biotechnology field, **other crop methods and the agricultural product quality** by increasing funds for work and further enhancing **cooperation and coordination between public sector research** and companies **at European, national and regional level** (Ferreira, Bourzai, Patrie, Vergnaud);

12a. Stresses that the existence of publicly funded research must be guaranteed and R&D activity in small biotechnology undertakings and plant-technology centres must be supported in order to maintain maximum competitiveness at the various levels of the food production chain; (Ayuso)

13. Fears that the ~~existing complex and extensive~~ implementation of the Community legislation on biotechnological trials and the lengthy approval procedure for placing inventions on the market ~~are creating~~ **may create** real obstacles to European research and may lead to research activities and human resources being moved outside the EU; ~~fears also that these may be contributing to a strong concentration of research, inventions and immaterial rights among a few big global players, thus increasing their influence and power to the detriment of smaller companies and making countries and people more dependant on them;~~ (McGuinness, Glavakis)

13a. Fears that the complex and comprehensive arrangements for recognising agricultural crop varieties and the rules on marketing them currently constitute genuine obstacles to seed research and varietal conservation within small-scale farming and could lead to impoverished varietal diversity in Europe; fears also that this may help to considerably concentrate intellectual property rights among a small number of concerns and hence increase their influence and power over food safety and the dependence of countries and populations on those concerns; calls therefore for the immediate establishment of the legal basis, called for in Directive 98/95/EC, which would make it possible, under seed marketing legislation, to preserve varieties at threat from genetic erosion, through in situ and on-farm use;

(Graefe zu Baringdorf)

13b. Also fears that these may be contributing to a strong concentration of research, inventions and immaterial rights among a few big global players, thus increasing their influence and power to the detriment of smaller companies and making countries and people more dependent on them; (McGuinness)

13d. Calls on the Commission and Member States to conduct, under the Seventh

framework programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities, a sweeping socio-economic study at European level that includes a comparison of different methods of agricultural production; (Ferreira, Bourzai, Patrie, Vergnaud, Berman)

13f. *Calls for intellectual property to be protected in the field of agricultural and food biotechnology in order to stimulate private investment in this area;* (Ayuso)

13f. *Considers that GMO research should be in line with Parliament's legislative resolution concerning the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013), which stresses that research will aim to integrate the diversity of scientific knowledge in order to develop balanced, sustainable and socially acceptable solutions and approaches;*(Berman)

13c. *Welcomes new developments including the recent development of RTDS - The Rapid Trait Development System - which uses the plant's own genetic machinery to change its DNA, through a process known as site-directed mutagenesis;* (McGuinness)

13e. *Emphasises the need to conduct balanced and transparent discussions and assessments involving all the parties concerned, including the European public;* (Ferreira, Bourzai, Patrie, Vergnaud)

14. Reaffirms its support for guidelines and legislation to be used to safeguard experiments needed for field trials when new products are developed; , *and points to the legal obligations regarding the transparency of those trials and public access to information;* (Ferreira, Bourzai, Patrie, Vergnaud, Berman)

14a. *Stresses that the legislation and guidelines used in carrying out experiments must seriously take into account the protection of consumers and the environment;* (Gklavakis)

14b. *Underscores the fact that, in the case of GMOs too, liability rules based on the originator principle must be applied;* (Sommer)

Global developments

15. Considers that biotechnology ~~should concentrate at least half of its efforts to finding~~ genuine solutions to global challenges such as constantly increasing need for food, environmental problems, sustainable development and energy sufficiency, *which are urgently needed; emphasizes the importance of biotechnology for the future of sustainable agriculture, for example in developing bio-energy, substitutes for oil products such as plastics and new sustainable methods for growing crops; considers that this should include helping* developing countries *in need* to achieve *the implementation of* the Millennium Development Goals; (Berman)

15. Considers that biotechnology *may have a role to play in* finding genuine solutions to

global challenges such as constantly increasing need for food, environmental problems, sustainable development and energy sufficiency, and **may** help developing countries to reduce poverty, thus helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals;

NOTE: BOTH AMENDMENTS TO PARA 15 WERE ADOPTED. HAVE PUT BOTH IN AS AM UNSURE HOW AGRI COMM SECRETARIAT WILL COMBINE THEM

16. Notes **with concern** the WTO's ruling of 29 September 2006 on the Community approval procedures for genetically modified crops; ~~stresses that the Commission and Member States must respond and react accordingly;~~ **which ruling did not find in favour of any one single party, and notes that unapproved GMOs have been detected in commodity imports into the EU and emphasizes that the EU approach to the regulation of GMOs is justified;** (Berman)

Responding to public concerns

17. Observes the need to enhance and broaden public debate, access to objective information and the improvement of the level of scientific knowledge; **points out that the vast majority of the European public are not in favour of GMOs, while not being opposed to biotechnology in principle;** considers that it is the responsibility of policy-makers, as well as industry, the scientific community and non-governmental organisations, to communicate ~~to~~ **with** citizens in a clear and transparent manner **on** the benefits and risks of biotechnologies; (Ferreira, Bourzai, Patrie, Vergnaud, Berman)

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18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission.

Vote for the adoption of the modified Resolution:

In favour of the Resolution: 22

Against the Resolution: 15

Abstentions: 6

Vote in plenary: March 14th 2007