

"Berlin Manifesto for GMO-free Regions and Biodiversity in Europe"

Our Land, our Future, our Europe

The regions of Europe have the right to determine their own ways of farming, eating, producing and selling food and of protecting their environment and landscapes, their culture and heritage, their seed, their rural development, their economic future. This includes the right to decide about the use of genetically modified plants and animals in their agriculture and ecosystems.

Our choice

We all share the fundamental human right to choose what we eat. Choices about the use of reproductive material in a common environment cannot be made individually, as they affect all people sharing these commons. Decisions about the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the shape of our landscape should be made democratically in the regions and not be imposed by individual farmers, bureaucrats or companies. Decisions can be wrong and thus should be open for change and reversal.

Our seed

The local diversity of seeds and traditional varieties and their wild relatives is the foundation for a region's unique composition of taste and the heritage of a region and is the basis for further innovation and development of seed. Protecting and encouraging the conservation and breeding of native and adapted local varieties and the integrity of farm saved seed is an important duty and right of regional agricultural policy. As seeds reproduce there can be no thresholds for any unlabelled GM contamination of non-GM conventional, organic and traditional varieties.

Our agricultural diversity

Agri-Culture is an important part of our regional way of life. Socio-economic and cultural impacts must be taken into account when introducing agrotechnologies such as GMO. Most European regions have made the promotion of sustainable and organic farming and regional marketing priorities for their rural development. Where the right to farm without GMOs and without undue changes to the local agricultural practice can not be guaranteed, the introduction of GMOs must be prevented.

Our natural biodiversity

The shape of Europe's environment and landscapes, including its protected areas, is the result of thousands of years of human cultivation. The enormous wealth of different landscapes, ecosystems and species must be protected by those who share this common heritage. Safeguarding our

biodiversity from the spread and introgression of GM varieties is a conservation goal in itself.

Our safety and precaution

Science can be wrong, but GMOs cannot easily be recalled, if detrimental effects occur. Hence the regions have the right to follow the precautionary principle on GMO release.

Our food sovereignty and labels

Most Europeans don't want GM-food. To serve this demand is part of a region's food sovereignty and an important economic chance. Regional authorities must be able to protect quality labels, purity standards, organic production and designations of origin at competitive prices. This includes access to GMO free animal feed.

Our co-existence

In most cases and for most species there is no realistic chance for coexistence between GM and non-GM farming, just as there is none between silence and noise in a room. The highest standards of protection are required for local cultivars and their wild relatives. The level of protection and standards of co-existence, including their costs, must be assessed and decided upon locally and regionally. Fair and sustainable co-existence must prevail between neighbours and economic partners. It must not be forced upon their traditional practices and future development.

Our Europe

The diversity of regions shapes the identity of Europe. In a global economy we do need common European standards on food safety, transparency, liability, environmental and nature protection and market access. They should be designed to serve and not to suppress the local and regional self-determination of the people of Europe. We will defend these rights and duties and the beauties and joys of our regions throughout Europe.

Berlin, 23rd January 2005

190 participants of the Berlin Conference on GMO free Regions, biodiversity and rural development from regions in 28 countries of Europe.