

Citizens' summary

EU report - coexistence of GM crops with conventional and organic farming

BACKGROUND

- EU rules on **genetically modified crops** are comprehensive:
 - growing GM crops requires **authorisation** based on a **rigorous safety assessment** (environmental and health impact)
 - food and feed derived from GM crops must be **labelled** as such, to inform consumers.
 - technical and administrative measures must be taken to ensure GM crops can **sustainably coexist with conventional or organic farming** (e.g. limiting cross-fertilisation of plants in neighbouring fields)
- In Europe, cultivation of GM crops is **still comparatively small-scale** (2008 figures):
 - world-wide - **125 million hectares**
 - EU - **100 000 hectares** in six EU countries, largely Spain (just one type - a GM maize (MON810) resistant to certain pests).

WHAT DOES THE REPORT SAY ABOUT GM COEXISTENCE?

- It gives an **overview of GM coexistence measures** implemented so far in EU countries - Governments (especially those that have yet to introduce their own measures) and stakeholders can use it **to compare approaches** in this new policy field.
- It summarises Commission work on GM coexistence.

Main conclusions:

- EU countries have made **significant progress formulating GM coexistence laws** in recent years
- production of GM crops has **expanded slightly** (but is still very limited)
- GM crops have **not caused any demonstrable damage** to existing non-GM farming
- GM coexistence measures **vary by country** - in part due to regional differences in farming conditions (field sizes, climatic conditions, etc.)
- this has not caused any problems where there are different rules on each side of a border.

WHAT ARE THE RESPECTIVE ROLES OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE EU?

National governments – rather than the EU – are generally best placed to identify the most effective and efficient GM coexistence measures, given local agricultural and climatic conditions

- Where coexistence of certain crops is difficult to achieve due to local conditions, **areas** may be designated where **only GM or non-GM varieties of a given crop** can be grown.

These measures should be **based on voluntary decisions by all farmers** in that area, so they can choose between conventional, organic and GM.

- **Liability rules** for potential economic **damage from mixing GM and non-GM crops**.

Every EU country has rules for compensation of economic damage in their national civil law. Some have also opted for specific compensation rules for GM coexistence.

There is **no need for the EU to interfere** with – or attempt to standardise – national civil law on this issue.

However, to meet the **clear need for better guidance** for governments on how to develop efficient technical GM coexistence measures, the EU has created the [European Coexistence Bureau](#) to produce guidelines.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The EU will:

- continue to **monitor and report** on GM coexistence, ensuring national measures do not distort competition within the EU.
- continue **networking** with national authorities
- **develop crop-specific technical guidance** for GM coexistence measures,
- produce an **economic assessment** of the need to develop new rules on the presence of **GMOs in seeds**
- perform further **research**.