



The New Atlantic Trade and Investment Regime (TTIP): EU GMO Rules Will be Scrapped. EU Commission Caves in to US Demands

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A joint report conducted by Greenpeace, Corporate Europe Observatory and Gene Watch UK issued a briefing paper last week entitled "[Commission fails to regulate new GMOs after intense US lobbying.](#)"

In essence, the European Commission has effectively deserted its principles when it comes to GMO's entering the food chain within the 28 nation bloc. Intense lobbying by United States representatives for the EU Commission to disregard current GMO rules which require stringent safety tests and labelling has proved successful. The result is that genetically modified organisms produced through a modified technique called 'gene editing' will be allowed. Gene editing is all but the same as anything we understand about GMO's generally.

Freedom of Information documents show the scale of US lobbying has overwhelmed the EU Commission who now stand accused of bowing to US pressure and abdicating to the corporations and rejecting citizen concerns. The documents reveal that US representatives pushed for the EU to disregard its own GMO rules on the basis that the EU were simply putting up barriers and stifling trade under the proposed TTIP negotiations. The papers state that the EU should completely ignore health and environmental safeguards to pave the way for successful negotiations.

On the [EC website](#) the very first paragraph reads: "The European Union has established a legal framework to ensure that the development of modern biotechnology, and more specifically of GMOs, takes place in safe conditions."

In the EU's [GMO directive/2001/18](#) the Directive clearly states: (clause 10)

"For a comprehensive and transparent legislative framework, it is necessary to ensure that the public is consulted by either the Commission or the Member States during the preparation of measures and that they are informed of the measures taken during the implementation of this Directive"

and (clause 19)

"A case-by-case environmental risk assessment should always be carried out prior to a release. It should also take due account of potential cumulative long-term effects associated with the interaction with other GMOs and the

environment.”

In addition, the GMO Directive is [quite clear](#) on one thing (clause 23):

“No GMOs, as or in products, intended for deliberate release are to be considered for placing on the market without first having been subjected to satisfactory field testing at the research and development stage in ecosystems which could be affected by their use.”

Clearly none of these clauses within the directive are going to be adhered to under the new TTIP regime. The EU Commission requested a '[legal opinion](#)' to be carried out, not an environmental impact report. There's a difference. Here, the EU Commission has been able to establish legally that GMO's created through certain new techniques such as gene editing somehow makes them safe and therefore not subject to a high bar of scrutiny that previously existed. The 'opinion' request was announced last year by the commission and that triggered an intense round of lobbying by the US.

Originally the EU Commission had stated that this technique would be classified the same way as other GMO's which the US representatives stated would be “another blow to agriculture and technology”. In its response, it is not overly surprising given the secretive nature of TTIP negotiations that the full text of the legal opinion has not been published and other than a leak, the public will not be given sight of it. Corporate Europe Observatory sent six freedom of Information requests, none have revealed the information required.

These new gene editing techniques are simply a way round current rules and as the documents show, the US was clearly unhappy with new breeding techniques requiring new rules and ominously stated that “regulatory hurdles between governments would lead to potentially significant trade disruption” - in other words, they issued a threat.

US companies are heavily involved in gene editing techniques including the use of ODM (oligonucleotide-directed mutagenesis). For example, this includes a company called Cibus which acquired a herbicide resistant oilseed rape engineered through this technique to the US market. Cibus then tried to [bypass EU rules](#) by lobbying the Commission to classify ODM as a non GMO.

Dow Chemicals and DuPont, now merged to form DowDuPont have a big interest in the same techniques as revealed by recent patent applications.

US corporations are very used to having strong trade support from the US government who heavily pressure external entities such as sovereign states with companies such as Monsanto having GM soybeans pushed by the US trade department within the TTIP negotiations.

In the US genetically modified organisms are not routinely tested by a regulatory system and can even be produced and placed on the market for human or animal consumption without any form of testing whatsoever. In addition, there are no labelling laws that require these products to be identified in the US food chain. The US Food and Drug Administration, obviously acting on behalf of corporations even rejected large scale citizen protest petitions for food labelling of GMO's.

The aim of the corporations involved, supported by the US trade department, is to get to a position where no real testing regulations or food labelling systems or laws are present to protect or at least inform European citizens of what they are consuming.

Officially there are now 38 countries that have fully banned the use of GMO foods. 28 of those nations reside within the European Union. Nations with strong anti-GMO laws are Belize, Peru, Ecuador and Venezuela in the Americas, Turkey, Bhutan, Saudi Arabia and Kyrgyzstan in Asia, Algeria and Madagascar in Africa. The picture on [GM cultivation bans across Africa](#) is not clear due to the current pressure being put on many African governments by the Biotech industry and the Gates Foundation to lift long-standing bans on the import of unmilled GMO seeds or unmilled GMO food aid.

In addition, [Russia](#) has not only banned the use of GMO foods but also banned any imports. Last year, [China](#) started allowing the use of GMO seeds and may well end up being a world leader in the field within a few years.

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