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OPEN LETTER TO COMMISSION PRESIDENT JUNCKER

cc. First Vice-President Frans Timmermans
Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis

10 April 2017

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMOs) AND DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

Dear President Juncker,

Since the start of your term as Commission President you have placed much emphasis on making the European Union more democratic. In relation to the authorisations of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), you said that you *"would not want the Commission to be able to take a decision when a majority of Member States has not encouraged it to do so."* [1]

Since then, your Commission has proposed to change the decision-making rules across sectors, including for GMOs. [2] Discussions on this proposal are just beginning.

However, the Commission will soon decide on the authorisation of three GM maize crops for cultivation (DuPont Pioneer's 1507, Syngenta's Bt11 and Monsanto's MON810). On 6 October 2016, the European Parliament voted by a large majority to reject their authorisation. On 27 March 2017, sixteen member states voted in the Appeal Committee against the authorisation of 1507 and Bt11, six voted in favour and another six abstained. Fourteen member states also voted against renewing the licence of Monsanto's MON810, the only GM crop currently grown in the EU, whilst eight voted in favour and six abstained.

The Commission does not have a mandate to authorise these GMOs.

The outcome of the Appeal Committee vote on 27 March shows that most EU member states oppose the authorisation of GM maize 1507, Bt11 and MON810 for cultivation. Although no qualified majority against their authorisation was reached, the member states did not give the Commission a mandate to authorise these GMOs.

If your Commission were to authorise these GMOs, it would impose a decision that goes against the majority of EU member states. This would not only run counter to your efforts to make the EU more democratic; it would effectively demonstrate contempt for democratic principles.

The Commission should issue a proposal to reject authorisation of the crops.

Given the strong opposition from EU governments, MEPs and citizens, the only option is for the Commission to reject the applications for authorisation. This will garner greater support among EU member states than their approval, whilst allowing the Commission to fulfil its legal obligation to act.

National GMO bans are no excuse for disregarding democratic principles.

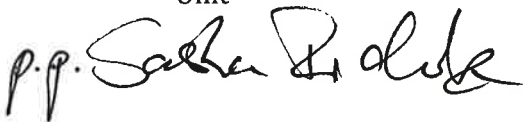
The fact that the GMOs will not be grown in countries with national bans cannot result in the discounting of their votes. All EU countries voted with full knowledge of the national and regional bans adopted at the end of 2015, including the UK which voted in favour of authorisation despite the fact that three of its four regions (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) have instituted bans.

As we outlined in our letter dated 13 February 2017 ^[3], the Commission should only approve products such as GMOs when a qualified majority of EU countries supports this.

We urge you to respect democratic principles and to stay true to your promise to enhance democratic decision-making on GMO authorisations.

Yours sincerely,

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[1] Jean-Claude Juncker, July 2014, [Political Guidelines for the next European Commission](#)

[2] European Commission, February 2017, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 laying down the rules and general principles concerning mechanisms for control by Member States of the Commission's exercise of implementing powers

[3] Our [letter of 13 February 2017](#)