



# **10** years of inaction! years of negative consequences!

The European Commission has promised to give Europe an internal market for seeds by setting a threshold for GMOs in conventional seeds.

**For 10 years it has failed to act. How many more years of broken promises?**

## **Adventitious presence: what's the problem for seed companies?**

The term Adventitious Presence (AP) refers to the unintentional mixing of trace amounts of one type of seed or grain with another. AP occurs in all arable farming at any step in the production of seed or grain or at any stage of further processing in the agro-food chain. Since plant breeding, seed production and commercial farming are conducted in the same open farming environment, it is impossible to achieve 100% purity in any of these products. There may be cross pollination from other plants or mixing during harvesting, cleaning or packaging.

Low impurities in seed of any crop have therefore always been accepted and the EU's seed legislation defines acceptable and economically practicable levels for such AP.

This is what Europe's seed industry demands for GMOs in its conventional seed as well – **a practicable threshold!**

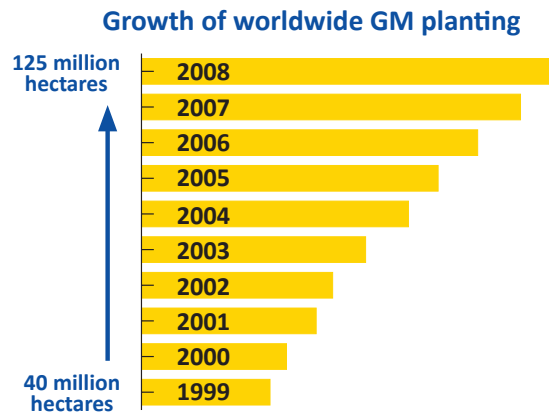
## **Consequences of inaction: destructions, costs and uncertainty**

Because no EU seed thresholds for GMOs are set, some Member States have imposed their own, often extremely costly conditions on the seed industry. As a consequence, fields have to be destroyed and seed companies and their staff even face criminal proceedings because of extremely low level presence of GMOs in their seed. But foremost, the Common Market for seed is more and more eroding with restrictions to seed trade and limited availability of varieties to farmers.

The continuous failure of the Commission to follow its announcements with concrete action deprives Europe's seed industry of legal certainty, its single market and its economic future.

# 10 YEARS of broken promises and failure to act of ignoring reality

- 2008** December Council of ENVI Ministers invites Commission to “adopt practicable AP in seeds thresholds as soon as possible”.  
President Barroso’s Biotechnology Sherpa Group calls for AP thresholds to be set.
- 2007** Commission’s mid-term review of EU Life Sciences and Biotech strategy asks for a threshold.
- 2006** Commission-sponsored JRC study emphasises urgent need for AP thresholds for seeds EU GM Conference in Vienna calls for thresholds to be “urgently set”.  
EU Agriculture Ministers unanimously demand threshold proposal “as soon as possible”.  
President Barroso assures European Seed Association that progress will be made.
- 2005** Commissioners debate reconfirms the need for seed labelling thresholds.
- 2004** Commissioners debate concludes “labelling thresholds...should urgently be finalised”.  
DG ENVI’s new proposal retracted during inter-service consultation.
- 2003** AP threshold proposal on College agenda.  
Proposal retracted at last moment and responsibility shifted to DG ENVI.
- 2002** DG SANCO puts forward revised proposal
- 2001** EU Scientific Committee on Plants confirms need for practical thresholds.
- 2000** The Commission (DG SANCO) drafts first AP threshold proposal.
- 1999** Seed industry requests Commission to set threshold levels for adventitious presence of GMOs in conventional seed.  
Commission agrees and starts preparation of a proposal.



# European Seed Industry: “Call for Action”

Europe’s plant breeders and seed producers request the Commission to end the era of inaction. After 10 years of ever-increasing problems, the time for reflection is over and action is needed!

We request that the Commission finally puts forward a proposal for thresholds for AP of GMO in conventional seed. This proposal must be proportionate and economically sustainable for Europe’s large number of small and medium sized seed businesses.

The Commission must take its responsibility to end the years of legal and related economic worries of plant breeders and seed producers and re-establish the Common Market for the EU’s seed industry and for its customers – Europe’s farmers.

**European Seed Association** (ESA) is the voice of the European seed industry. Its membership comprises 55 direct company members and 37 national seed associations, representing more than 1000 seed businesses all over the EU, most of them small and medium sized enterprises.

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