

Ministerial Conference “How to maintain GMO-free agriculture in Europe”

Joint Declaration

Under the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia, and in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary, the ministers responsible for agriculture met on 21 August 2015 in Ptuj, Slovenia, to exchange views on whether maintaining the GMO-free agriculture constitutes a competitive edge and an opportunity for agriculture in Europe, and what measures need to be adopted so as to materialise this vision. They discussed the challenges of restricting or prohibiting the cultivation of GMOs, a legislative proposal providing the possibility for Member States to prohibit use of GM food or feed on their territory, how to ensure the supply of non-GM feed and protein legumes and how to approach the consumer (by creating common rules on the identification of foodstuffs coming from holdings using non-GMO feed and schemes "produced without the use of GMOs").

The cultivation of genetically modified (GM) plants and placing on the market of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are opening up many issues to be resolved by the governments and their administrations citizens. The attitude towards the GMOs does not only define the current agricultural and environmental policies, as any relative actions taken and decisions adopted are linked to lasting impacts, and are determining the future of agriculture, food quality, nature, and biodiversity.

With the aim to contribute to development of GMO-free agriculture model, the participating representatives of EU Members States and representatives of Western Balkans adopted the following conclusions.

We

- 1. ACKNOWLEDGE that our task is to ensure the sustainable development of agriculture and production of quality and safe food by applying such cultivation methods which pose no threat to biodiversity and to the environment and maintain the diversity of agricultural production methods and traditions;*
- 2. RECALL that there are still certain questions about the long-term consequences of release of GMOs into the environment;*
- 3. EMPHASISE the need to develop a common approach to ensure possibilities for the GMO-free cultivation zones;*
- 4. EXPRESS our concern regarding the potential impact of a restriction or prohibition of use of GM food and feed, in particular in terms of functioning of the internal market, its fragmentation and distortion of competition; and SINGLE OUT the lack of legal certainty for those countries that decide to impose such restriction or prohibition;*
- 5. Bearing in mind the dependence on imported protein sources, SINGLE OUT the importance of ensuring a higher level of self-sufficiency in non-GM feed and protein legumes;*

6. *LOOK FORWARD* to further cooperation and putting additional efforts to finalise joint policies and standards in the field of production of food "produced without the use of GMOs"; and in this regard, *REITERATE* the importance of locally produced food as well as the importance of a consistent traceability of products intended for human consumption;

7. *UNDERLINES* the importance of informing the public about the findings and research in the field of GMOs; *REAFFIRM* the need to continue to raise awareness and educate consumers by providing them trustworthy information and by means of labelling as the latter empowers the consumer to choose between GM food or GM-free food.

Adopted in Ptuj, Slovenia, 21 August 2015.