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World GM plantings concern European grain, oilseed crushers and feed trade

The latest ISAAA report on the GM production area shows the increasing popularity of the cultivation of biotech crops for farmers around the world. As compared to last year, GM plantings increased by 12 % in 2007 and, in some cases, represent up to 90% of total crops. This upward trend has been recorded for more than 10 years now and shows no sign of stopping. This leads the seed breeding companies to develop ever more new GM events, for cultivation, processing, food and feed uses in the EU's main supplying countries. The EU is a major importer of raw materials from these countries, particularly of soybeans and soybean products, and feed ingredients from the maize processing industry.

According to DG AGRI, while the GM approval process takes on average 15 months in the US, the European authorization process takes over 30 months. These asynchronous approval processes represent a serious threat to the supply of vital sectors of the European food and feed industry, which cannot secure the necessary raw materials for the crushing plants and/or the compound feed units.

The current zero tolerance policy in the EU puts in jeopardy soybean crushing in Europe. Already in autumn 2008, possible trace level presence of new GM varieties in US soybeans (not yet authorized for import and processing in the EU) will bring the traditional crushing of US soybeans in the EU to a standstill. Soon thereafter, upon cultivation of the new GMO varieties in South America, if the zero tolerance still applies and the new varieties are not yet authorized in the EU, all soybean meal imports and the crushing of soybeans in the EU will stop with a dramatic impact on all of the EU animal feeding industries.

The EU livestock sector will indeed suffer irreversible damage, with the loss of up to 44% of its poultry and 35% of its pig production according to DG AGRI estimates*. There are no viable alternatives to the import of approximately 35 million tonnes of soybean products as the key vegetable protein component for animal feed.

This is the reason why the European Grain Traders Association (COCERAL), the EU Oil and Proteinmeal Industry (FEDIOL) and the European Feed Manufacturers Federation (FEFAC) urgently call upon the EU and Member States for the establishment of a threshold for the presence of GMOs, which have undergone a feed and food safety risk assessment in and outside the EU according to the CODEX GM plant guideline. The above-mentioned industries call upon the EU and Member State authorities to safeguard the EU's crushing and livestock sector by tackling this issue of zero tolerance before it is too late.

* http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/envir/gmo/economic_impactGMOs_en.pdf

Notes to the editor:

COCERAL is the acronym for “Comité du commerce des céréales, aliments du bétail, oléagineux, huile d’olive, huiles et graisses et agrofouritures” and is considered as the voice representing the European cereals, feedstuffs, oilseeds, olive oil, oils and fats and agrosupply trade”. The Members of COCERAL are the national trade organisations of most of the EU-27 Member States, who for their part represent collectors, distributors, exporters, importers and agribulk storers of the above-mentioned commodities. The members are composed of essentially private traders and in some countries also farmers’ cooperatives. For more information see COCERAL web site (www.coceral.com) or please contact Chantal Fauth, Secretary General

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FEFAC (Fédération Européenne des Fabricants d’Aliments Composés), the European Feed Manufacturers’ Federation, represents 21 national Associations in 20 EU Member States as well as Associations in Switzerland, Turkey and Norway with observer/associate member status. The European compound feed industry employs over 100,000 persons on app. 4,000 production sites often in rural areas, which offer few employment opportunities. For more information, see the FEFAC web site (www.fefac.eu) or please contact Alexander Döring, Secretary General

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FEDIOL (the EU Oil and Proteinmeal Industry) represents the interests of the European seed and bean crushers, meals producers and vegetable oils producers/processors. FEDIOL members crush 30 million tonnes of oilseeds a year, produce 20 million tonnes of meals and 9 million tonnes of vegetable oils and further process 7 million tonnes of imported oils. There are some 150 oilseeds processing and vegetable oils and fats production facilities across Europe, employing approximately 20 000 people. For more information, see the FEDIOL website (www.fediol.be) or contact Pascal Cogels, Director General

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