

GM plants effectively banned by parliament as first GMO lab opens

12.05.10 Sofia – Bulgaria's parliament has approved a law that will in effect ban any cultivation of GMO crops in the country. "There will be no field on the country's territory where GMOs can be cultivated," said Kostadin Yazov from the ruling centre-right Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) party, the politician who proposed the bill. According to the Bulgarian Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) Act, any release of GMOs – whether for commercial or scientific reasons – will be prohibited in large buffer zones around both protected areas (known as Natura 2000 sites) and fields used to grow organic crops. The ruling means a de-facto ban on GMO acreage in the country. The party dropped previous plans for a GMO moratorium because the new law also allows for a ban of crops already approved by the European Commission.

According to the legislation, fines for perpetrators were raised to more than a0.5m. Protesters said they were happy with the new law.

Initially the government had planned to ease in GMO cultivation, but then changed tracks after growing public resistance to the introduction of a licensing regime.

GMO lab up and running

At the end of April, Bulgaria's first lab for GMO testing opened its doors. It will be processing samples at the request of Bulgaria's Regional Inspectorates of Environment and Water, as well material from external entries. Within a few months, the lab will receive full accreditation, and will then begin providing authorities with results that will be used to impose fines on both individuals and companies.

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