

Illegal GM potato variety found in Sweden

By **Simon Taylor**

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Commission asks German firm that developed GM variety for an explanation.

The European Commission has asked German chemicals company **BASF** to explain why an unauthorised genetically modified variety of potato has been planted in Sweden.

BASF Plant Science, which developed Amadea, informed the Swedish authorities that the Amadea variety had been found in fields planted with the Amflora variety, which has been approved for cultivation in the **EU**. The Swedish authorities ordered the fields to be cleared of the Amadea variety on 2 September.

A spokesman for **John Dalli**, the European commissioner for health, said today (6 September) that the Commission had asked BASF, which developed the Amadea variety, to explain the situation. He said the Commission would also contact the authorities in Germany and the Czech Republic, the two other countries where another GM potato, Amflora, has been planted. The EU approved Amflora for planting in March. The potato will be grown to provide starch for the paper industry.

BASF has filed a request for authorisation for Amadea but the approval procedure has not been completed.

Mette Johansson, communications manager at BASF Plant Science, said: "Amadea has gone through a comprehensive safety assessment, which showed that the potatoes are safe for humans, animals and the environment".

Stefanie Hundsdorfer, agriculture policy advisor at campaign group **Greenpeace**, said the discovery of Amadea was a "deplorable lapse of bio-security". She called on the Swedish authorities to order all crops in the fields where Amadea has been found to be destroyed and said BASF should test all fields where Amflora has been planted.