

---

## EU halts GM maize approvals

---

The European Commission has suspended the EU approvals process for genetically modified Bt maize, due to concerns over US research indicating that pollen from the crop can harm monarch butterfly larvae (see this issue, p 17). The first application to fall foul of the decision is Pioneer Hi-Bred's Bt maize, which will not now be referred to next month's EU Environment Council meeting for a vote on its approval. This would have been one of the final registration stages for Pioneer's maize (MON 809), which was cleared by the EU Scientific Committee on Plants last year (Agrow No 305, p 7).

In line with the application of the "precautionary principle", the suspension has been imposed until the US findings can be examined by the SCP, says an EU Environment Directorate spokesman. Approved Bt maize lines from Monsanto (MON 810) and Novartis can continue to be used, as only limited commercial plantings have taken place and the Commission does not believe there is "any immediate danger", he said. However, "appropriate action" may be required after the review of the US research.

---

## Germany to speed up 90/220 revision?

---

The German government, which is the current holder of the EU Presidency, has issued compromise proposals on the revision of the EU GMO registration Directive 90/220, with the aim of speeding up the reform process.

The presidency paper issued this month emphasises the safety aspects of releases of genetically modified organisms into the environment in a bid to get EU member states to reach a common position. The paper has been forwarded to the European Commission and EU member states and was due to be discussed at the EU Environment Council meeting on May 24th-25th.

Guidelines on the risk assessment of GM crop trials should be included in the GMO Directive to achieve harmonised views across Europe, suggests the German presidency paper. Applicants would be required to submit a monitoring programme for GM trials before their approval. Monitoring requirements would depend on the results of the risk assessment. EU approvals of GM crops should be limited to a maximum of 12 years, with the possibility of extending this period. Public participation in the decision procedure should be improved and harmonised across Europe.

The German presidency paper takes into account opinions of the Commission and Parliament during the revision of 90/220. Last month, the EU Environment Commissioner rejected several of the proposals put forward at the Parliament's first reading of the draft proposals (Agrow No 326, p 10). The Parliament's suggestions included an extension of the authorisation period for GMOs from seven to 12 years and the introduction of company liability for any damage to human health or the environment (Agrow *ibid*).

---

## German IVA urges imports review

---

The German agrochemical association (IVA) is pushing for a review of the government's assessment procedure for parallel imports from countries in the EU and the European Economic Area (EEA). Imports from countries outside these two regions should be subject to "normal registration" by the German federal biological institute (BBA), says the IVA.

The IVA points to a ruling by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) last month in a case brought by the British Agrochemicals Association (Agrow No 325, p 10). This stated that agrochemical products imported from outside the EU and the EEA have to be registered under the EU agrochemical registration Directive, even if they are identical to a product already approved in the country.

Current German rules apply the same assessment requirements to parallel imports from all countries, points out the IVA. The administrative law on the assessment of agrochemical products for identity with an already registered product was prepared by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture last June and has been passed by the German Parliament's upper chamber.

However, the law will not come into force until completion of the notification procedure with the EU Commission. The Commission has raised objections to the law and has put the notification on hold until June 3rd. The IVA is urging the German Ministry to modify the law to enable the BBA to comply with the ECJ ruling.

---

## France to simplify parallel imports

---

The French Ministry of Agriculture is drafting proposals to simplify the registration procedure for parallel imports of agrochemicals from other EU member states.

This follows a warning from the European Commission last summer after the association of users and distributors of agrochemicals in Europe, AUDACE, took legal action against the French authorities over their stance on parallel imports (Agrow No 316, p 13). AUDACE claimed that France's refusal to set up a simplified procedure contravened the EU agrochemical registration Directive, which was transposed into French law in 1994.

The French industry association, the UIPP, believes that regulations on parallel imports should be clarified. Approvals should only be granted for identical products whose traceability can be ensured, it stresses.

---

## EUROPEAN NEWS IN BRIEF

---

● **EU proposals on GM thresholds delayed further:** EU proposals on threshold levels for genetically modified ingredients in food, above which food would have to be labelled, are not expected until September at the earliest. The delay is partly due to the mass resignation of the EU Commissioners in March (Agrow No 326, p 9). The EU Scientific Committee on Food will consider draft proposals in June.