Workshop summary - **C2: Future availability of non-GM resources**

Saturday, 25th April 2009 - 12.30 – 15.00h

Some definitions were established at the beginning of the workshop:
GM-free = (a) legally meaning 0.0% GMO content (but: no PCR lab can test at 0.0%, authorities agree EU-wide that the technical limit of quantification is 0.1%); (b) product claim legally defined in some EU countries (e.g., Austria: "gentechnikfrei erzeugt", Germany: "ohne Gentechnik")
Non-GMO = (a) term not legally defined by any laws; can mean anything today in industry circles from 0.1% to 0.9%; (b) also is name of a certification program assuring 0.1% max. GMO content

Factors threatening the future availability of GMO-free raw materials include corporate lobbying efforts within the EU in order to ensure that GM animal products never have to be labeled. It was said that **making a** (voluntary) **claim** on a food product as being GM-free is permitted (except in the case where non-GM feed was used, for instance in the case of animal products), but that the focus should be on getting a law passed that all products containing or fed on GMOs need to be labeled.

Making a claim of being GM-free and being labeled as such costs money and time and these costs have to be passed on to the consumer. Despite **mandatory labeling** of animal products being recently discussed in the EU Parliament, such an action seems unlikely to happen, given the stronghold corporate lobbyists have in convincing politicians and consumers alike that there is nothing to discuss when it comes to GMOs (as they are perfectly safe in their eyes, so labeling should never be an issue and let the scaremongers do their unnecessary testing and pay for it while they're at it).

Tolerated thresholds of GMOs were discussed and the fact that consumers are not comfortable with any threshold because they question why any GMOs should be permitted at all. From the industry perspective, lowering thresholds was not seen as pragmatic because the lower the thresholds, the more it costs to detect GMOs and the more expensive a product becomes (in the end, for the consumer). Are consumers willing to pay this cost? Will industry give up if demands are too high? There are relatively new regulations in Austria and Germany protecting companies that claim GM-free with specific legislation stating that as long as the company orders GM-free raw materials or ingredients and an IP (identity preservation) system is in place, adventitious contamination up to 0.9% will still be ok for a GM-free claim. It is the **intention** combined with **appropriate systems and procedures** being in place that determine the conditions for a GM-free claim.

Also discussed were the problems not even resulting from co-existence challenges, but from the transport and logistics involving animal feed. Wolfgang Heck discussed the problems he encountered when his company found GMO dust on his soybeans. The dust was from trucks passing his property that contained GMO feed. He temporary solved the problem by washing the beans, but this extra step costs money and should be addressed in terms of making the "polluter" pay. He began an awareness campaign and is still fighting with authorities about his right to have clean food.

The big picture was also discussed, how we need to look at the system as a whole to find out where we need to change things. The system is wrong when we have to rely on so many GMO products (being imported) in the first place. Estimates were given of 35-36 million tons of soy meal per annum being used for feed within the EU-27. Eating less meat products was discussed as well as our need to close the (farming) system to avoid not having non-GMO resources in the future.

The goal in the case of GMOs would be to force those using GMOs in food and feed to label as there is no reason why non-GMO products should bear the burden of cost involved for testing.