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Press release

Agriculture/Environment/Economy/EU/Food

ARCHE NOAH: EU Agriculture Ministers must defend seed diversity

Belgian Council Presidency presents progress report on seed legislation

Schilttern, Vienna, Luxembourg - Since the decision in favour of a new EU seed law in the European Parliament last April, large agrochemical companies have been calling ever more loudly for drastic restrictions on seed diversity and farmers' rights. At the last Council meeting of EU agriculture ministers before the summer break next week (24 June 2024), a progress report by the Belgian Council Presidency is on the agenda. "We call on the EU Agriculture Council to make sensible decisions and resist the pressure from the agrochemical giants. We need a secure, stable foundation for a resilient and diverse food system," says Magdalena Prieler, seed policy expert at ARCHE NOAH. "Agriculture ministers must ensure in Luxembourg that local varieties, regional cuisine and farmers' right to seeds are not jeopardised by global corporations."

Just under two months ago, on 24 April 2024, the plenary of the European Parliament voted on the new seed law. ARCHE NOAH has mixed feelings about the decision on new regulations for the production and marketing of seeds and other plant propagating material. The original proposal by the European Commission profoundly threatened seed diversity. But despite aggressive lobbying by the seed industry and its lobby group Euroseeds, a majority of MEPs largely supported the constructive proposal of the Agriculture Committee. "With its decision, the European Parliament has recognised that seed diversity is crucial for our farmers," says Magdalena Prieler.

The European Parliament's plenary decision from April 2024 now forms the basis for its position in the triilogue negotiations with the European Commission and the Council of Agriculture Ministers on the final legislative text. The actual negotiations between the EU institutions are not expected to begin until the winter. The new rules will greatly influence which tomatoes, apples, bread and beer will end up on Europeans' plates and in European's glasses in the coming decades.

Many key points for seed diversity are still controversial between the Member States: it is unclear whether small quantities of seeds and propagating material may be passed on for the purpose of preserving diversity without being restricted by inappropriate industry rules, as is currently possible in some countries like Austria. Some Member States also want to ban farmers from selling their own seeds and plant propagating material. Another controversial issue is the need for adapted rules for diversity varieties that fulfil different quality criteria to those of the industry. "Together with over 120,000 citizens from all over Europe, we are calling on Agriculture Ministers to make a clear and active commitment to seed diversity at the Council meeting! Only if the ministers ensure the transfer of small quantities for conservation and guarantee farmers' rights to sell seeds our food supply will be secured in the long term," Prieler appeals ahead of the negotiations.

Further Queries:

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