



Sen. Lugar welcomes EU's first biotech OK in a decade

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Washington, March 2 – Sen. Dick Lugar (R-IN) is praising Tuesday's European Union (EU) decision to approve the first new biotech crop for European farmers in more than a decade. The approval follows – very slowly – a 2008 study which found no substantial safety risks from new disease-resistant seeds. The hope now is that Europe will issue more approvals following its controversial OK for BASF's Amflora potatoes.

Pointing out that "The world's population will grow from our current 6 billion people to 9 billion people by 2050," Lugar said that "Bioscience solutions will need to be part of the answer to feeding this growing population, especially if we want to conserve land and water, reduce use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, and enhance human health. I applaud the EU for taking this step and encourage their continued review."

This approval for genetically modified potatoes for the production of industrial starch means that European farmers will be able to grow two GM crops under specified conditions. The only previous approval was given to Monsanto in 1998 for one variety of GM corn. Along with approving the Amflora potatoes for cultivation Tuesday, the European Commission approved three other varieties of GM corn from Monsanto for food and feed, but only for import and processing, not for cultivation.

In announcing the approvals, the EU's recently appointed Health Commissioner John Dalli raised hope for additional approvals when he said in a Brussels news conference that "Responsible innovation will be my guiding principle when dealing with innovative technologies."

Stefan Marcinowski, member of the Board of Executive Directors of BASF SE welcomed the EU approval. "After waiting for more than 13 years, we are delighted that the European Commission has approved Amflora," he said. "We hope, that this decision is a milestone for further innovative products that will promote a competitive and sustainable agriculture in Europe." BASF Plant Science President Peter Eckes predicated that "Amflora will strengthen the international position of the European potato starch industry."

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