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EU Parliament vote on genetic modification

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The [European Parliament](#) today voted to accept [proposals](#) on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) that establish clear traceability and labeling procedures that will modify [existing European regulations](#).

The proposals are being presented by the European Commission as the latest step in building a clear regulatory system to allow new approvals for the import and production of GM crops and foods. They would impose strict labeling and traceability requirements. All foods containing more than 0.9% GM ingredients would have to declare the use of GM materials on the label. To ensure the traceability of GM materials, business operators using or handling GM products will be required to transmit and retain information at each stage between production and placing of products on the market. So systems will need to be devised to identify to whom and from whom GM products are made available.

The European Commission says the proposals "will ensure full traceability of GMOs throughout the chain from farm to table and will provide consumers with comprehensive information by labeling all food and feed consisting of, containing or produced from a GMO." Such requirements have in the past been criticized as unnecessary and likely to deter consumers from buying foods containing GM ingredients and hence deter producers from manufacturing them.

There has been a de facto moratorium on new GMO approvals in Europe since mid-1998. This issue is at the center of a [trade dispute](#) between the European Union and the United States and some other countries, who have taken their complaint to the World Trade Organization for resolution.

"Today's vote is a very important step forward towards full implementation of the EU legislation on GMOs," said European Environment Commissioner Margot Wallström in a statement. "It will reinforce our international credibility and will certainly help in building public confidence in new technologies."

The proposals must now be confirmed by the European Council, and the de facto moratorium will only be lifted for certain when specific new GM approvals are given the go ahead. The moratorium arose when certain member countries of the European Union vetoed such approvals, as they are entitled to do under EU rules. It remains to be seen whether the safeguards and rules voted for today will be sufficient for these countries to withdraw their objections and let new approvals proceed.

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