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EU food safety agency future questioned

EFA press release by Plaid Cymru MEP Jill Evans

Plaid Cymru MEP **Jill Evans** has welcomed today's decision by the European Parliament's Petitions Committee to call for an investigation into the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA). The decision follows two petitions submitted by Dr Brian John of anti-GMO campaign organisation GM Free Cymru and supported by Ms Evans.

MEPs heard serious questions raised about EFSA's impartiality in taking decisions in respect of authorising GMOs, with key concerns including:

- EFSA's use of confidential, untested data provided by the applicants in making its decisions;
- The pro-industry bias of EFSA's decisions panel with a majority drawn from GM industry backgrounds;
- A lack of independent scientific testing of plants prior to authorisation decisions;
- A lack of transparency and public access to the decision making process;
- Inflexibility in decision making and a refusal to review decisions over time.

Concerns were also raised about the European Commission's proposals for future reform of the GM authorisation process.

The committee heard that public opposition to GM crops now stands at 61% across Europe according to recent polls. MEPs were also told of the Avaaz Citizen's petition against GMOs which collected more 1.2 million signatures. This was presented to the European Commission last December, and so far no action has been taken.

Speaking after the meeting in Brussels, **Jill Evans MEP** said:

"Very serious concerns have been raised about EFSA's impartiality and its decision making process in respect of GMO authorisations. I'm very pleased that the European Parliament's Petitions Committee has decided that this warrants further investigation.

"We have asked the Environment Committee to look into the concerns that have been raised. We will

also be writing to EFSA to request urgent clarification on the more serious points.

"In light of these very serious concerns I would urge the European Commission to take the matter in hand. EFSA must be reformed so that the public can have confidence in its decision making process. We need independence and transparency at EFSA and the Commission must ensure that happens."

Dr Brian John of GM Free Cymru told MEPs:

"Parliament must insist that EFSA is reformed to eliminate the 'revolving door' approach which sees far too much industry influence exercised at the heart of the organisation.

"The authorisation process should be open, transparent and fully independent. The basis on which decisions are made must be verifiable and open to scrutiny. This is important not only from a food safety perspective but also in terms of enhancing public trust.

"EFSA is allowed far too much discretion in its operations. I am pleased that the European Parliament is taking very seriously indeed its role in providing proper scrutiny of this agency. I fully welcome further investigation into EFSA and in particular into its decision making processes."

Notes

Text of petitions can be found at:

www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/peti/cm/824/824545/824545en.pdf

www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/peti/dv/peti20110315_sir436-10_/peti20110315_sir436-10_en.pdf

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Responsible MEPs



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