

Polish Parliament approves ban on GM feed (25/7/2006)

More good news from Poland, just two months after the passage of a bill outlawing the planting of GM seeds.

POLISH PARLIAMENT APPROVED ON JULY 22 A BAN ON GMO IN ANIMAL FEED PRESS RELEASE

In recent years Cargill, Smithfield Foods, Danish Crown and other multinational companies operating in Poland have imported large quantities of genetically modified soybeans from the U.S., Brazil and Argentina. On July 22, the Polish Sejm gave the companies two years to prove that use of GM animal feed is safe for humans, animals and the environment or face a total ban on further imports of GM feed into Poland.

This action, coming two months after passage of a bill that outlawed planting GM seeds in Poland, gives evidence that the governing Law and Justice party intends to carry out its campaign promise to make Poland "GMO free". The 210-186 vote approving the two year deadline was a triumph for Senator Jerzy Chroscikowski, chairman of the Senat Agriculture commission and Secretary of the Rural Solidarnosc farmers union, who introduced the amendment and pushed it through the Senat earlier in the week.

Marek Kryda, Polish director for the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) a Washington DC based NGO that has worked with Greenpeace and the International Coalition for Protection of the Polish Countryside (ICPPC) for a GMO ban, expressed elation. "This has been an encouraging week" Kryda said. "On Thursday, Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski promised to act in the interest of small, independent farmers. Only one day later we have the passage of this bill. After years of corrupt governments pillaging and selling out rural Poland, we seem -- at last -- to have a government that puts the interests of rural Poles ahead of the interests of multinational giants."

"Sixteen years ago" said Tom Garrett, AWI's international coordinator, "Polish resistance catalyzed the disintegration of the Soviet totalitarian empire. We have dreamed that Polish resistance might pierce the bubble of another, perhaps even more pernicious tyranny, that of huge multinational corporations that are creating havoc across the planet. In any case, Poland is once more setting an example against foreign bullying. I hope and expect that it will soon act against the agribusiness corporations such as Smithfield Foods, Poldanor and Sokolow that invaded the country in the 1990s and have corrupted the ministries and flouted Polish laws and regulations with complete impunity."

"But we must not underestimate the strength of the industry, or fail to recognize that this government is on a collision course with the EU Commission, WTO and US administration. There is an urgent need for Poland to coordinate with other nations, such as Greece and Austria that are holding out against pressure to accept GMOs" Kryda said.

Both men praised the work of ICPPC both in Poland and Brussels and the leadership of former Polish Peasant Party head Janusz Wojciechowski, who has worked against GMO in the European Parliament.

Ironically, just as Poland presented GM animal feed importers with a two year ultimatum, the UK capitulated to the demands of the industry and opened the door to commercial farming of GM crops.

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