

## **Group # X**

A group of farmers in north Italy, led by Mr Giorgio Fidenato e Mr Silvano Dalla Libera, have seeded in their fields BT-resistant corn to increase their revenues and to decrease application of pesticides per unit of product harvested. The farmers have publicly exposed their action to local, national, and international media, in an effort to promote genetically modified organism (GMO) cultivation in Italy and Europe. However, the local laws forbid open-field use of GMO. In application of this law, the authorities have seized the fields.

Few environmental groups have taken further action, and they have physically destroyed the corn plants, in order to avoid the (alleged) contamination of other corn field in the vicinity. The environmental groups, led by Greenpeace Italy, claim that the BT-resistant corn damage the biodiversity, particularly bees and other insects, and poses a serious risk for cross-pollination, which will eventually spread the BT-resistant corn at great distance.

The local environmental protection agency analysed the insect biodiversity in the BT-corn field and in other conventional corn field. However, the results are inconclusive, due to the poor statistical methodology adopted. A further study by scientist in the university did not suggest any significant alteration to the insect biodiversity.

The contamination of conventional corn with BT-corn was also measured, but such contamination seems to be strongly dependent on the separation between each field, which is not standard in the area.

Finally, a group of farmers that grow organic corn and other produces, claim that the BT-resistant corn poses a serious threat to their business, as they would be not able to market corn containing more than 0.9% wt. BT-corn as organic. In the region, the organic corn farmers are the 0.2% of the total farmers and the surface cultivated with organic corn is 0.4% of the total surface planted with corn.

Following seize and destruction of their corn, the farmers sues the local government for economic damage. They claim that MON810 is well-tested and perfectly safe for open-field application, as already demonstrated in other countries.

The local court of justice do not have the broad range of scientific and technical competence required to deal with this case, so they appoint a team of consultants to gain insight in this complex matter. The team is composed by a plant scientist from an industrial consulting firm, a professor of agronomy from the local university, an expert of the corn market; an insect biologist specialized in biodiversity, and an environmental ethicist.

As members of this experienced team, you have to compile a well-documented and informative report on this matter. Your report should include a section where you recommend/not recommend that the farmers are refunded of their damage and you should also provide a concise section about your recommendation to change the current legal framework.

Most likely, your report will be used to prepare a new national law for the applications of GMO in open field in Italy, and will also be acquired by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) that is preparing a proposal for a new EU-wide GMO regulation.

## **References**

<http://www.scienceonthenet.eu/content/article/roberto-defez/exemplary-punishment/august-2014>

<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/it/efsajournal/doc/as1008.pdf>