



For the Promotion of  
European Protein Production

## **Non GM Danube Region Standards completed Handover to ministers from 15 countries**

Press release

Vienna, 20. October 2016

In an one-year participatory process, and taking 15 nations into account, regionally harmonised standards for non-GM in the Danube region were developed: a standard on the definition of the non-GM production processes of food and its labelling and another standard on the risk-based control of non-GM production processes. The handover of the documents to the responsible agricultural ministers represents another step in the harmonisation of regulations for a non-GM Europe.

“The Non GM Danube Region Standards were developed on the base of the already successfully implemented non-GM labelling and inspection standards from Austria, Germany and Slovenia. The regional harmonisation is essential to avoid trade barriers between European countries and to provide freedom of choice for consumers based on uniform criteria,” says Rosmarie Metz, GIZ project leader non-GM quality soya from the Danube region (Bosnia & Hercegovina and Serbia).

“Together with a regional expert group and consultants of the participating countries, we developed two regionally harmonised standard documents in a year long process: for the definition of non-GM production of food and its labelling as well as risk-based control of non-GMO production processes. The harmonisation was only possible through close involvement of the participating countries,” says Helmut Gaugitsch, project leader of the Non GM Standards at the Austrian Umweltbundesamt (Federal Environmental Agency).

The standards apply to the production of plant based foods, but also to products of animal origin. Products of animal origin, which are fed with feed containing soya, can be seen as a bottleneck. An equivalent of 40 million tons soya beans and soya meal is imported to Europe each year – the majority is genetically modified. Sustainability, regionality and non-GM are becoming more important for consumers in Europe. This motivates companies to align their production politics with this trend. For this reason, a regionally harmonised, clear and practically realisable non-GM standard is of great importance for the Donau Soja quality program as well, to ensure the non-GM status

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of all components of soya products, feed and processed products of animal origin with the quality label "Donau Soja" or "Europe Soya".

"By handing over the Non GM Danube Region Standards to the ministers of the participating countries we reached a milestone – due to the increasing cultivation of non-GM protein plants in Europe and a growing demand by consumers, a harmonisation of the non-GM regulations in Europe is essential. The Non GM Danube Region Standards can have a signal effect towards a Europe-wide harmonisation," says Matthias Krön, chairman of the Donau Soja Association.

The starting point for the development of the standards was the adopted minister declaration of Moravske Toplice in 2013, initiated by Slovenia and the Donau Soja Association. In this document, the agricultural ministers of the Danube region agreed to uphold the freedom of choice of consumers through a common, regional standard for the production, labelling and inspection of non-GM food. The Non GM Danube Region Standards should particularly assist those countries of the Danube region that do not have their own regulations. The development of the standards was supported by the project "GMO-Free Quality Soya from the Danube Region" that is carried out by the German Corporation for International Cooperation (Deutschen Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)) on behalf of the BMZ (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development). The technical lead was carried out by the Austrian Federal Environmental Agency (*Umweltbundesamt*).

The [Non-GM Danube Region Production and Labelling Standard](#) and the [Non-GM Danube Region Inspection Standard](#) can be downloaded here.

#### **About GIZ:**

The German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) GmbH provides their services worldwide in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development with more than 17,000 employees. The GIZ has over 50 years of experience in a wide variety of areas, including economic development and employment, energy and the environment, and peace and security. Their business volume exceeds 2.1 billion euros. As a public-benefit federal enterprise, GIZ helps the German Government, especially the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, as well as many other public and private commissioning parties in about 130 countries, to achieve their goals in international cooperation. For this reason, the GIZ works to deliver effective solutions that offer people better prospects and sustainably improve their living conditions.

#### **About the Austrian Federal Environmental Agency:**

The Austrian Federal Environmental Agency is Austria's leading expert institution for environmental topics. With over 450 employees from 55 scientific disciplines, the agency is one of the biggest employers in the environmental sector. During its 30 year existence, the Federal Environmental Agency developed strategies and solutions for decision-makers in politics, management and economy to tackle challenges like climate change, resource scarcity or energy revolution. On an international level, the agency is active in over 200 networks and committees and advises the European Parliament and the EU commission among others.



## **About Donau Soja:**

The Donau Soja Association is a non-profit, independent association and constitutes Europe's major initiative in the agricultural sector. The association unites civilian population, politics and various businesses along the value chain, ranging from non-GM seed production to food of animal and plant origin. Donau Soja's focus lies in non-GM, source identified high-quality soya from the Danube Region. The association has more than 240 members from all over Europe. With six subsidiaries (AT, GER, SRB, RO, UA, MD) and two representatives (IT, POL) Donau Soja is well represented. The Donau Soja Association aims to improve the conditions for a successful soya cultivation in Europe and to decrease the soya imports from overseas. 15 countries have signed the Donau Soja Declaration for the promotion of non-GM soya cultivation in Europe. Donau Soja is supported by [Gesellschaft Internationale Zusammenarbeit](#) and [Austrian Development Agency](#).

Further information about Donau Soja can be found on [www.donausoja.org](http://www.donausoja.org).

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