November 02, 2018, Kyiv city, Ukraine
Donau Soja Organization and Agent Green Association (Romania)

Post Release

48% OF SOYA ON THE UKRAINIAN FIELDS IS GENETICALLY MODIFIED

On November 2, 2018, a press conference "48% of soya on the Ukrainian fields is genetically modified" organized by the Donau Soja and the Agent Green, was held at the leading Ukrainian news agency "UNIAN". The topics of the event were the uncontrolled crops of the GM soya in Ukraine, the availability of the GM products on the shelves in supermarkets, and inappropriate legislation regarding the GMO circulation.

At the press conference, 7 speakers shared their thoughts on GMO, including Country Director in Ukraine of the Donau Soja Organization **Oksana Prosolenko**, President of the Agent Green Association **Gabriel Paun**, Head of the State Service of Ukraine for Food Safety and Consumer Protection **Volodymyr Lapa,** Director General of the Directorate of the Food Product Safety and Quality at the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine **Mykola Moroz**, Operational Director of the Astarta-Kiev Agro-Industrial Holding **Zeljko Erceg**, Partner of the Arzinger Law Firm **Oleksandr Plotnikov** and Executive Director of the Seed Association of Ukraine **Siuzana Hryhorenko.**

During the summer of 2018, the Agent Green examined the soya crops in Ukraine for the presence of GMO. Soya field analysis of 60 samples taken showed that 29 of them contained GMO. **Gabriel Paun** pointed out that "20 years ago in Romania, the turnover of GMO was uncontrolled". Now the situation in Ukraine is similar: "This is evidenced not only by the Agent Green's report, but also by the results of the food inspection on the shelves of supermarkets", - said **Oksana Prosolenko**. According to her, when purchasing products from supermarket chains, samples were taken and analysis on GMO content were carried out. In order to confirm the obtained results, those samples were transferred to the official laboratory, and the GMO presence was confirmed in a soya product of a Ukrainian producer without proper labelling. This fact indicates the presence of GMO on the store shelves, and the Ukrainian consumes do not know which product they buy. For the analysis only the products containing soya were purchased, but the GMO can be found in any other products. On the fact of the laboratory analysis, a complaint was written to the supervisory authorities. If the presence of GMO in the product will be confirmed - the entire batch of these products will be withdrawn from circulation.

Volodymyr Lapa said that the GMO problem is very acute and the time has come to solve it at the state level. He also noted that he is open to discussion and invites key stakeholders to join in the improving the existing draft laws on the GMO circulation in order to create proper conditions for the transparent functioning of the seed market and regulation of the GM products circulation.

According to **Mykola Moroz**, Ukraine is becoming a powerful player in the global market. We are moving in the field of export and Ukraine becomes the guarantor of global food security. At the moment, the moratorium on inspections in the field of the food safety has already been lifted and from next year, the State Service of Ukraine for Food Safety and Consumer Protection will be able to fully check all market operators, which should lead to the positive results of the state control GMO.

Zeljko Erceg – the representative of the Astarta-Kiev said that their company works in the legal field of Ukraine and creates additional margin by growing and processing the GMO-free soybeans at their own facilities. There is a great potential for non-GM production in Ukraine as the natural products are becoming a trend among global community. Astarta-Kiev as an example which can

prove that it is possible in Ukraine to successfully cultivate non-GM soybeans and get a good margin. The difference in price between GM and non-GM soybeans in the market is an average of $ 30 per ton. “We have a program of import and production of non-GM soybean seeds: we purchase European and Canadian varieties, multiply them in our fields and finish the process at seed processing plants. And thus we produce about 10 000 tons of soybean per year. This is the production volume that provides our needs and reserve for sale to partners”, - Zeljko Erceg said. Some agricultural producers think that they save on crop cultivation when using GM seeds, but they do not consider the yields at the same time. Zeljko Erceg noted: “In fact, yields of GM crops are usually lower as the reproduction of uncertified seeds is unknown. While applying right technology the high-quality non-GM varieties will always give higher yields and greatly offset the higher production costs”.

Siuzana Hryhorenko supported Zeljko Erceg and spoke about the shadow market, and mentioned that a demand creates a supply. Buying seeds of the soybean containing GMO, the producer is confident that he will save 50-70 $ at the beginning and will not waste time on herbicide treatment. However, the yield is not assessed. And companies that adhere to the law are required to undergo varietal inspections before registering a variety (the procedure for registering a variety lasts up to 3 years) and this takes time and money.

Oleksandr Plotnikov expressed his opinion on the existing legal framework for controlling the turnover of GMOs, noting that, in accordance with the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, Ukraine has been obliged to bring its legislation in line with three of the five regulations on the GMO turnover. The existing draft laws aimed at improving the existing law of Ukraine on GMO do not fully correspond to what the EU requires from Ukraine, but if all market players work together, then it is quite possible to prepare a draft law which will fully comply with the EU requirements.

Oksana Prosolenko noted that the paradox is that the companies that work in the legal field are the first to suffer. Companies have to pay extra costs and incur losses in order to work in a legal field which should be a common practice. So in any way GMO production is much more expensive, and those who fulfil non-GMO contracts bear additional costs. In general, the domestic producer of the entire production technology bears costs that can reach from 10 to 15 euros per ton. So it turns out that in our country there is a paid law, under which work is much more expensive. “I want to emphasize that the European market is very promising for Ukraine, because the largest consumer of GMO soybeans in the world is located in the world is the EU, where most of the diet of animal feed is based on the soybeans. Soya is a strategically important product for EU countries. And since the production of soybeans in Ukraine is constantly growing, we must become a key partner for the EU. Our country is in the process of the European integration. And what do we demonstrate to European partners? Very large efforts are now focused on creating an international image of the country. We must create a trust in the Ukrainian producer. But what trust can we talk about if we do not have quality control? De jure we do not use GMO in our country, but in fact there is a completely different situation”, — said Oksana Prosolenko.

“I also want to say that the lack of respect for the current legislation and the lack of effective control destroy confidence in the quality of Ukrainian products not only from the European partners, but also from the Ukrainian consumers. Therefore, I can say that the European market is very promising for Ukraine, because the EU, as the largest consumer of GMO-free soya in the world, is very close to us. And for this we must settle the GMO market. Therefore, the Donau Soja together with key associations and public organizations created an open letter of appeal to the President, Prime Minister and Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (Ukrainian Parliament), which will be signed by the mentioned organizations and sent for consideration after the press conference”, — said **Oksana Prosolenko.**