

GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

PRESS RELEASE

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WORKING GROUP EXTENDS CLOSING DATE FOR RECEIPT OF SUBMISSIONS ON GM COEXISTENCE

The interdepartmental/interagency Working Group, set up by the Department of Agriculture and Food, today announced an extension of the closing date for submissions from stakeholders on best practices for the coexistence of GM crops with non-GM crops in Ireland.

The Working Group was set up in late 2003 to develop a national strategy and best practices to ensure the coexistence of genetically modified crops with conventional and organic farming. This was done following the determination by the EU Commission that rules governing the coexistence of GM crops with non-GM crops were best dealt with at national level. The Commission published a set of guidelines aimed at assisting national competent authorities in drawing up these measures. All Member States are obliged to have their measures submitted to the EU Commission by July 2005.

Coexistence is an economic and market related issue. It deals specifically with the implementation of good farming practices in the cultivation of GM crops which have been fully approved for deliberate release into the environment. The objective is to ensure minimum admixture between GM and non-GM crops. The issues of the human health and environmental safety aspects of these GM crops is dealt with separately under the legislation operated by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the EPA.

The Working Group invited submissions from some 25 stakeholders representing, among others, conventional and organic farming organizations, the seed trade, insurance and consumer groups. It has received submissions and met a number of these groups. Today, Friday, November 12th 2004, was set as the final date for receipt of submissions thereby allowing the Working Group submit its Report to the Department in a timely fashion. However, a number of the stakeholders have requested an extension to this closing date and the Working Group, in the interest of considering the views of as broad a spectrum as possible, has acceded to this request and extended the date for receipt of submissions to the end of the year - 31st December 2004.

As a consequence of this extension the Working Group now propose to be in position to submit its report to the Department early in 2005.