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## Austria

## Biotechnology

## Carinthian Biotechnology Precautionary Bill

### 2003

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**Report Highlights:**

In October, the government of the province of Carinthia introduced a draft biotechnology precautionary bill that could become a model for anti-biotech legislation across Europe. The period for filing an opinion by the EU Commission expired last week. The law might enter into force before the Carinthian local elections in March 2004.

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Includes PSD Changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
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In October, the government of the province of Carinthia introduced a draft biotechnology precautionary bill ("Gentechnik-Vorsorgegesetz") that could become a model for anti-biotech legislation across Europe. The period for filing an opinion on the part of the EU Commission (EC) expired last week, so the law might enter into force before the Carinthian local elections in March 2004. A spokesman for the Enterprise and Information Society told the Associated Press Austria that the dialogue with Carinthia will continue, since a few questions need to be clarified from the point of view of the EC and the British Government. However, the law may enter into force, he said.

In order to meet the EU criteria on "co-existence" rules, the Carinthians drafted a "more clever" bill than that of Upper Austria (that simply intended to outlaw biotech crops in their whole province). Besides stipulating the obligation to request authorization to plant biotech-containing crops, the bill enables farmers to create "GMO-free" zones on a voluntary basis. In addition, the bill introduces a biotech register to guarantee the traceability of biotech products. Greenpeace already rejoices, saying that a strict implementation of the law should have the same effect as the prohibition of biotech crops.

According to a press release of the responsible government member Georg Wurmitzer (OVP), the planting of biotech crops will require authorization "only." The main goals of the bill are:

- Containment of unintended spreading of biotech crops
- Co-existence between biotech crops and conventional agriculture
  
- Protection of sensitive areas such as national parks and nature reserves from "contamination" by biotech crops.

Carinthia and the province of Salzburg (that is preparing a similar draft bill) are part of a European network of regions (among them Tuscany, Schleswig-Holstein, Wales, and the Basque region) seeking to restrict or outlaw agricultural biotechnology without breaching EU regulations. ORF reported that with the Carinthian bill--the breakthrough might have been achieved. This development may have trade implications for the United States and others even if the moratorium on new biotech approvals is lifted next year.