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Poland

Agricultural Situation

Mixed Reaction from Polish Farm Groups to Proposed Ban on GMOs

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Approved by:

Ed Porter
U.S. Embassy

Prepared by:

WFM/EP

Report Highlights:

A survey of Polish farm organizations revealed a mixed reaction to the Polish Council of Ministers' recent proposal to ban all GMO products, except food and products for research purposes in enclosed areas.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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The Polish Chamber of the Grain and Feed Industry in its March 13, 2006, news bulletin strongly opposed the Council's recent proposal banning the use of most GM products. The Chamber especially opposed the ban on the import of soybean meal for compound feed production. The Chamber, which sent its concerns to Polish government (GOP) representatives, noted that there are limited availabilities of non-GM soybean meal on the world market and the proposed ban could lead to increased expenses for the Polish feed industry.

The Chamber is comprised of representatives from the grain feed and milling industry, oilseed crushing and refining industry and biofuel producers as well as representatives from companies marketing and trading grain and feed components. According to the Chamber, GOP approval of the Council's proposal would limit supplies of raw feed materials and increase production costs for compound feeds. This could have a significant impact on the competitiveness in world markets of Polish poultry and livestock producers. Poland imports close to 1.8 MMT of soybean meal annually, of which almost 100 percent is derived from GM soybeans. Soybean meal accounts for about 75 percent of all protein meals used in compound feed production in Poland.

The GOP has solicited comment from the Institute of Agricultural Economics regarding the impact of the Council's proposal. In response, the Institute agreed with the Chamber's assessment of the limited availabilities of non-GM feed components and the possibility of a drastic increase in the cost of compound feed production and consequently livestock prices in Poland. It is unclear how much weight the GOP will give the Institute's opinion. The GOP must now draft legislation based on the Council's recommendations for parliamentary and presidential approval. This could take months.

Opinions among other farm groups vary. The Federation of Grain Associations has a divided position. The Federation primarily represents producers other than corn producers. Some members have said that they would not oppose the planting of GM crops in Poland. Others, however, note that a ban on GM crops would mean less competition for non-GM crops, especially from GM corn. The Federation has yet to announce an official position.

The Association of Corn Producers also has not yet developed a position. The Association has been educating its members about the benefits of GM corn but given the lack of varieties able to be grown in Poland that offer significant economic benefits, there is little pressure from members to oppose the proposed ban.

In contrast, the Rapeseed Producers' Association opposes the cultivation of GM crops in Poland. Members in the crushing business, not farmer members, are behind this position. They oppose GM rapeseed because they fear that there will not be effective means to prevent commingling of non-GM and GM crops. Some farmers are also worried about what they consider the ease by which rapeseed can cross-pollinate. Other farmers say, however, that they are open to GM varieties, especially since they anticipate increased demand for rapeseed for bio-diesel production.

It is likely the GOP will approve the Council's recommendations. When is not clear: it could take several months. In addition, it remains to be seen how EC officials will react since the recommendations appear to violate EU regulations. Finally, while it seems that politicians in Poland remain strongly opposed to biotech products, with mixed feelings or lack of decision in case of public opinion, farmer acceptance could rise sharply with an increase in the availability of GM seed that provides significant economic benefits to Polish farmers.