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Austria

Biotechnology

Austria Fails to Win EU Support for Biotech Corn Ban

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Report Highlights:

On Tuesday, October 30, Austria failed to win enough support among EU countries to keep in place the disputed biotech corn bans on the import and processing of MON810 and T12 food and animal feed but not planting seeds. Failure to reach a qualified majority at the Council means the Commission must take a decision on whether or not to force Austria to lift its bans.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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On Tuesday, October 30, Austria failed to win enough support among EU countries to keep in place the disputed biotech corn bans on the import and processing of MON810 and T12 food and animal feed but not planting seeds. This should allow the EU to avoid WTO retaliatory action. The WTO said that EU member states that ban biotech products under the so-called 'safe-guard clause' did so without sufficient scientific evidence. According to the WTO such countries like Austria violate international trade rules.

Even though Austria failed to win enough support at the Environment Council in Luxembourg the country can still continue to ban the two discussed biotech corn types. The failure to reach a qualified majority at the Council means the Commission must take a decision on whether or not to force Austria to lift its bans. The spokesperson of EU environment commissioner Stavros Dimas signaled that the Commission will come to a decision before November 11 which is the time limit given by the WTO before taking retaliatory action.

The vote at the Environment Minister Council only included the import of food and feed of the mentioned biotech corn but not seed. Austrian supermarket chains can still refuse to sell biotech labeled products. No major changes in Austrian trade are expected if the ban is lifted. Previous attempts by the European Commission to force Austria to lift its bans on planting seeds were firmly rejected by a qualified majority of EU ministers.