

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Voluntary - Public

Date: 11/4/2009

GAIN Report Number:

Ireland

Post: Dublin

Irish Farmers Want Level Playing Field on Biotechnology Use

Report Categories:

Biotechnology

Approved By:

Bobby Richey

Prepared By:

Michael Hanley

Report Highlights:

The Irish Farmers Association called on the European Commission to ban imports of meat, milk and grain products that have been produced with the aid of biotechnology until such time as Irish and EU farmers are allowed use such technologies.

General Information:

In its first ever public statement on biotechnology, the largest Irish farmers union, the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) called on the European Commission (EC) to ban imports of meat, milk and grain products that have been produced with the aid of biotechnology until such time as the EC allows its farmers to use such technologies. The IFA said that if EU farmers cannot use biotech feed or technology to reduce crop production costs, then an import ban should be put in place until the situation is rectified. The IFA said that the

competitiveness of pig, poultry, dairy and livestock production in Europe is under serious threat because of the failure of politicians to accept science-based decisions when approving novel feeds for animal production.

The statement from Pádraig Walshe, current President of the IFA (and also President of the European Farmers Union, COPA) is in reaction to the reluctance of many Irish and EU feed importers to source soybeans from the U.S. because of the risk of cross-contamination with EU-unapproved biotechnology events. As a result, there are worries that the availability of imported soybeans may be in short supply in late Winter 2009/early Spring 2010.

Walshe accused politicians of adopting double standards by allowing imports of livestock products produced from novel feeds while denying EU farmers the same opportunity. Walshe said it was time for politicians to recognize the rigorous science-based assessment procedure in place.

Comment: While this call for a ban on imports is likely to fall on deaf ears in the corridors of Brussels, this is the first time that the IFA has publically addressed the issue of biotechnology. While calling for a level playing-field on production techniques, the IFA is cognizant that Irish beef and dairy products are marketed worldwide as products produced from grass-fed animals. The IFA does not want to be at the forefront in calling for the easy-availability of biotechnology for Ireland, but for European farming as a whole. End Comment.