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T-TIP could force Germany to abolish plans for GMO labeling

Report Categories:

Agriculture in the News

Biotechnology and Other New Production

Technologies

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Report Highlights:

According to the German parliament's scientific service, T-TIP could force Germany to abolish its plans for labeling for food from animals fed with GMO feed. The German government advocates EU mandatory labeling of products derived from animals fed with genetically modified plants (such as U.S. soybeans) in their coalition agreement.

General Information:

A confidential advisory report by the by the German parliament's scientific service concluded that T-TIP could force Germany to abolish its plans for labeling for food from animals fed with GMO feed. The confidential advisory opinion was leaked to Spiegel Online and published on Spiegel Online on November 14, 2014. The German government advocates EU mandatory labeling of products derived from animals fed with genetically modified plants (such as U.S. soybeans) in their coalition agreement.

According to Spiegel Online, the Scientific Service of the German parliament said that if the EU, after the ratification of T-TIP, required companies to label meat, milk or cheese from animals that were fed genetically modified organisms, and then there would be a risk of "U.S. and Canadian companies lodging complaints against the EU." New labelling requirements could be seen as new non-tariff barriers to trade by the U.S.A. and Canada. The Scientific Service wrote further that the labelling could "collide" with the international commitments of the EU and its member states in the framework of T-TIP and CETA. Spiegel Online added that the current EU rules are problematic for the U.S. and that the U.S. already complained years ago about the labelling of GMO foods.

The possible effects of expanded labeling requirements for products derived from animals fed with GMO's is the title of a study that has recently been published by the German Federal Research Institute for Rural Areas, Forestry and Fisheries on behalf of the German Ministry for Food and Agriculture. The study states that according to current EU legislation, food has to be labelled if it is a GMO or produced from a GMO - irrespective of the detectability of the genetic modification. Food from animals fed with GMO feed does not fall under the labelling requirements and changes in the labelling requirements can just be made on EU-level. By introducing stricter requirements in Germany, more than 270,000 firms would be affected by the expanded GMO labelling proposal. The number of companies in the European Union would be significantly higher. These companies would have to bear additional costs for labelling and documentation, as well as for separating food-processing lines into those with and without mandatory labelling requirements. Supply-side related changes concerning price reactions, availability of non-GMO feed, and trade effects can be expected, but their magnitude strongly depends on the reactions of consumers and retailers to an expanded GMO labelling. Since the labelled product feature cannot be detected analytically, official inspection and control authorities expect considerably higher control efforts. Consequently, the official control has to be intensified along the food chain by improving the cooperation of inspection and control authorities within Germany as well as between the EU member states. The study also comments on the difficulties to introduce new labeling and documentation requirements for food from third countries. Stricter labeling requirements could be seen as non-tariff barriers to trade.