

Is there GM food in Montenegro?

A genetically modified organism (GMO) is a living organism artificially created in the laboratory in which the genes of two in nature incompatible species are connected: e.g. fish and tomato, bacteria, viruses and corn, sea cucumber and pepper, man and pig, etc. GMOs are mainly used in agriculture, medicine and pharmacology.

There are many controversies about GM foods. Many studies claim that GM foods cause in humans as much as 65 most serious illnesses including the malignant ones. As food prices are increasing, GMOs are promoted as a solution. When new foods are introduced in the menu of a nation sometimes it takes years to detect the effects. Many environmental organisations, scientists and doctors advise consumers to pay attention to what they are buying in the stores, that is, to pay attention to the product code.



Montenegrin Minister of Agriculture, **Mr. Petar Ivanović** claims that the list of approved GMOs and GM products in Montenegro is empty, and until now not one GMO nor GM product has been registered, nor has received approval for being placed on the market, and that there are no reported cases of GMO food or seed reaching our market.

The Parliament of Montenegro in 2008 adopted the Law on Genetically Modified Organisms which was one of the conditions for accession of Montenegro to the EU and the WTO (World Trade Organization). This means, that both in the EU and Montenegro GMOs are allowed, but under certain conditions prescribed by the Law, emphasizes Ivanović.

If someone submitted an application for introducing a GMO, passed all required procedures and public hearings and the GMO was placed on the market, it would have to be labelled as such, exactly with the aim of informing the consumers, which is at the same time one of the basic principles of the Law on GMOs proscribed by Article 9: "The public has the right to be informed about GMO management and has the right to be involved in the decision making process in accordance with the Law", states Ivanović.

Authorized inspections carry out strict controls on importation and every product that originates from a country that allows GMOs must be accompanied by a certificate that the product is not a GM and does not contain GMOs, and in the future the National Council on Biosafety shall be constituted. In fact, through this Law, the Government is undertaking all necessary measures to protect consumers – emphasises at the end Mr. Ivanović.

Minister Ivanović claims that in Montenegro there is no GM food "neither on the market nor in production," but **Mr. Svetozar Radonjić**, agronomist, claims the contrary. "If we place in a tomato the gene of a jellyfish, for a laymen this perhaps looks like great science, but it is nonsense. If we put into a tomato something that will enable it, for example, to arrive green from Turkey and along the way turn red, we are actually eating green tomatoes, which is toxic because it contains solanine. Imported tomatoes can withstand not to rot for 15 days, and the local tomato rots after three days", emphasizes Radonjić.



"We cannot sell the domestic tomato on the market because the imported product is cheaper. It is not profitable to the mega markets to sell the domestic product when it can be imported at a cheap price. No Government that cares about the health, and about the economy, would allow GM food to enter the market. The only advantage of GM food is that it brings profit, and Montenegro, as a country with the largest amount of agricultural land per capita in Europe and as seventh with the largest amount of uncultivated land, offers a chance for organic production. Man cannot beat nature. Everything done against it must be reflected on the lives of people. The predictions from 1989 proved to be true, that we will have plenty of food, but that we will be hungry, because we will not be allowed to eat it", believes Radonjić.

In the agricultural centre "The Caring Gardener" **Danilo Vukotić** claims that they do not sell GM seeds, and do not know if there is any on sale in Montenegro. "Phytosanitary inspectors who perform the control in agricultural pharmacies never asked us whether we sell GM seed. Our pharmacy is in business less than a year, so I do not know whether there are any on our market. My personal view is that Montenegro does not need GM food and I would never buy it for personal use. On the other hand, in terms of sales, we may supply GM seeds if it is required by the market, and let everyone make a personal choice about the use of GM or ordinary seeds", said Vukotić.

The majority of asked citizens do not even know what GM food is, let alone the consequences of its consumption. **Milanka Mićunović** (67) says: "I eat everything from my garden, and I try at least not buy vegetables, and what is GMO I do not know." **Vukota Gojković** (63) points out that there should be more TV shows and stories to inform the citizens about GM food and that Montenegro should use its land to produce organic not GM foods.



Food is power, and whoever has food, will rule the world. Genetically modified food is the result of biotechnology, with the aim of achieving a "better quality and quantity." The newly-formed specimens (plants and animals) are more resistant to certain insects, viruses, fungi and pesticides, and this facilitates their production and increases the yield. On the other hand, this leads to changes in the ecological composition, eliminating some useful plants and insects, and creating new specimen which, as such, do not exist in nature and for which we do not yet know how they impact the planetary balance.

Note: All photos are obtained from the internet

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