



Co-extra press meeting, Paris
June 6th, 2005

PRESS RELEASE

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Kick-off meeting of the European integrated project CO-EXTRA: CO-EXistence and TRAcability of GM and non-GM supply chains

Paris, June 6th, 2005. The Co-Extra European project holds today its kick-off meeting in Paris. The objective of this new project is to provide to the different stakeholders the needed methods and tools to comply with the new EC regulations designed to manage the expected increase of marketed Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). With 52 partners from 18 countries (in Europe and also Russia, Brazil and Argentina), Co-Extra is a 4-years Integrated Project Co-Extra, which is funded with €13,5 million from the European Union's Sixth Research Framework Programme, under the Food Quality and Safety Priority.

Co-Extra aims at :

- developing comprehensive tools and methodologies and integrate them along with existing ones into embedded decision-support systems aimed at enabling **co-existence** between GM and non GM (conventional and organic) crops;
- **tracing** GMO materials and derived products, along the food and feed chains;
- **anticipating** the future expansion of GMOs in both quantitative as well as qualitative terms.

Co-Extra will study and validate biological containment methods and model supply chain organisations and provide practical tools and methods for implementing co-existence. In parallel, Co-Extra will design and integrate GMO detection tools, develop sampling plans, and elaborate new techniques to meet the challenges raised by increased demands for cost effective multiplex methods to detect as yet unapproved or unexamined GMOs and by e.g. stacked genes. Co-Extra will also study and propose the most appropriate information structure, content and flow management for ensuring reliable and cost-effective documentary traceability. Co-Extra will also pay great attention to the practical "implementability" of the proposed tools with regard to technical as well as economic, societal and even legal aspects.

To achieve its multi-dimensional objectives, the Co-Extra consortium has gathered a truly multidisciplinary partnership covering all of the needed competences to address co-existence and traceability issues from seed to consumer: biology, organisation modelling, decision mathematics, statistics, reliability, computation and detection methods.

Yves Bertheau, INRA's Co-extra scientific coordinator declared : "This project will provide tools and methods to help the food and feedstuffs producers, including SMEs, to better match their practises with the consumers' needs of reliable and cost-effective information. It is the first time, in the area of supply chains of GMO and non-GMO derived products, that such a project is consumer-driven, i.e. from fork to farm."

Stakeholders will be involved in the project from the start through the dialogue platform, editorial offices, focus groups, national relays, etc... Co-Extra outcomes will contribute to reinforcing consumers' confidence in labelling claims and therefore EU products at large. By helping economic stakeholders to meet consumers' requirements for reliable choices, Co-Extra will improve European competitiveness. When appropriate, Co-Extra outcomes will be proposed to standardisation after validation. Dissemination activities will largely benefit from the strong commitment of the "European Network of GMO Laboratories."

For Christian Patermann, Director Biotechnology, Agriculture and Food, of the European Commission "Co-existence and traceability of GMOs and non-GMOs are required by the current and forthcoming EC regulations and demanded by European consumers. As an integrated project and by gathering recognised experts from 18 countries, Co-extra is particularly well designed to generate deliverables required to achieve scientific and

technological objectives, to increase the impetus to Europe's competitiveness and to address major societal needs. He also stressed the interest of non-European countries in this work, like Russia, Argentina and Brazil."

The Co-Extra consortium also comprises several industrial companies including biotechnology-specialised companies. They will provide the project with the industry's point of view on the one hand, and their expertise on dialogue with stakeholders on the other hand.

For more information, please visit Co-extra website : <http://www.coextra.org>

Contacts :

-Yves Bertheau, INRA, Versailles, France
Phone: +33 1 30 83 32 04, E-mail: bertheau@versailles.inra.fr

Press offices :

- Céline Goupil, INRA, Paris, France
Phone: +33 1 42 75 91 69, E-mail: presse@inra.fr

- Dr. Kristina Sinemus, Genius Biotechnologie GmbH, Darmstadt, Germany
Phone: +49 6151 8724044, E-mail: ksinemus@genius-biotech.de