

An aerial photograph of a vast agricultural landscape in Romania. The fields are a mix of green and yellow, indicating different crops and stages of growth. A road or path runs through the middle of the fields, and a small white vehicle is visible on it. The background shows a flat horizon under a clear sky.

# **Report: Romania's Experience Shows GE Crops Do Not Meet European Quality Standards**

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# ROMANIA'S EXPERIENCE SHOWS GE CROPS DO NOT MEET EUROPEAN QUALITY STANDARDS

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**ABBREVIATIONS AND SPECIAL TERMS USED IN THE REPORT**

ANPM	The National Agency for Environmental Protection
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CV	Curriculum Vitae
EC	European Commission
EFSA	The European Food Safety Authority
EU	European Union
GE	Genetic Engineering (genetically engineered crops)
GMO	Genetically modified organism (also known as GE crops)
Ha	Hectares
IMAS	Name of a company for marketing and opinion polls
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America (also named US)
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
VAT	Value Added Tax

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Romania is a large agricultural country with 14 million ha of agriculture land and 9 million ha of arable land (about 3 million with maize) spread over 5 bio-geographical regions. It is the country that in 2006 was growing out of control more GE crops than all other European countries together and made a U turn switching to healthy organic production that boomed, currently reaching 260.000 ha. It is the country where Monsanto lost a country manager that speaks up today against biotechnology. Moreover, the biotech corporations' uses their powers like never before to win the rich soil of Romania and use the country as the EU back door for GE crops. Monsanto has since 2010 a minister for agriculture named of Valeriu Tabara who has no qualms in showing his affinity for the corporation. Adrian Radulescu, his Secretary of State is threatening to shot an anti GMO activist and declares himself a GMO fan. Several environmental ministers have attempted to ban GE crops in 2008 and 2010. President of the Biosafety Commission positioned himself against the cultivation of GE crops but blocks the ban attempts. The country is about to make another U turn in favor of GE crops and endanger the entire organic agriculture. Minister Tabara claims that GE soya will be accepted for cultivation by the EU Commission in 2012 and Romania will become once again the Champion of the continent at cultivation of GMOs. Only this time Romania is an EU Member State. Former minister Dacian Ciolos, currently EU Commissioner for Agriculture cuts Tabara's enthusiasm by downgrading GE as low quality products. The lack of performance of GE maize in the fields also convinced prominent Romanian farmers to quit GE crops. Only 822 ha have been planted with this crop in 2010. 81% of Romanians want a ban on cultivation of GE crops and several ambitious politicians have started a debate in the Parliament for a 5 years moratorium on all GE crops. No single GE food product can be found in supermarkets. This competition of GE crops and organic agriculture has become a symbolic fight between people's wish and corporations' influence over decision makers. The competition has reached its final stages. The game takes place now on Romanian soil and the price is the entire EU. The winner takes it all.

# 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE "MINISTRY" OF MONSANTO

## 1.1. Europe – the Last Frontier

The American agro-chemical corporation Monsanto produces and owns the vast majority of GE seeds that are cultivated all over the world, except Europe where resistance against biotechnology is high. This resistance is based on results of independent scientific research showing unacceptable negative impacts of GE crops on environment, health and agriculture. Ethical problems and concerns regarding profitability of GE crops are also key reasons for European consumers, farmers and politicians to reject genetic "cocktails" in food and fields. Along USA, Europe is the world's main standard maker and therefore it is crucial for the corporation to take control over the old continent's soil. EU farm chief, Dacian Ciolos personally felt the pressure of the biotech industry while visiting Washington D.C. where the lobbyists suggested that the European Union should open its soil for GE crops just like the USA did<sup>1</sup>. The US soil is so open to GE crops that USDA has settled upon a brilliant solution: let the biotech industry conduct its own environmental impact studies<sup>2</sup>.

## 1.2. Romania – the Trojan Horse

Wikileaks cables show that Romania is looking for guidance to Washington rather than Brussels when it comes to GE. The country is characterized as the "Trojan horse" of the U.S. policy on GE crops in the European Union<sup>3</sup>. Its 14 million hectares of agricultural land, with fertile soils that favor a wide variety of agricultural crops have raised the appetite of the American corporation for Romania years back. Several GE crops have been experimentally or commercially grown on hundreds of thousands of hectares since the '90s (soybeans, maize, sugar beat, potato, plum trees).

## 1.3. The Mafia of GE Shot to Kill

The fact that giant chemical corporations have grown deep roots in Governments, Parliaments, farmers associations and the scientific communities is nothing new. The millions of American dollars they pay to politicians to win more soil for GE crops are maybe outrageous, but nothing compares to Mr. Valeriu Tabara, collaborator of Monsanto, President of the Agriculture Committee in the Parliament and several times Minister for Agriculture in Romania.

Wikileaks cables also show that Tabara is doing the work of large American corporations, which want to force the entrance on the European market. USDA has recruited for the 1999 Cochran Program a group of six Romanian government officials who have responsibilities in the testing and registration process of GMOs and who also helped draft the Romanian legislation. The greatest concern of the "Biotech Group" was at that time the composition of the Biosafety Commission that oversaw activities related to implementation of the legislation on GMOs between 2000-2002<sup>4</sup>. The group was succesful. Up-to-date the sessions of the Commission are practically lead by Mrs. Elena Badea, a public supporter of GE crops. She was found in conflict of interests while leading a project funded by the World Bank to insert Monsanto Bt construct into sevrsl romanian potato varieties. As a member of the Biosafety Commission, she gave green light for this project and she was exposed in this situation during prime time news „the GMO mafia” at one of the main national TV channels<sup>5</sup>. The World Bank stopped funding the project, but the Romanian Government tolerates the conflict of interests. Aurel Maxim is the only member of the Biosafety Commission who stands against GE crops. He explains that the statistical methods used for safety assessment are chosen in such a way that the results are in favor of approval of GE crops.

Americans chose Tabara, the current agriculture minister, as the advocate of GE crops. This is revealed by Wikileaks channel on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005 and signed by Ambassador Jack Dyer Crouch's deputy Thomas Delare, where Tabara is described as one of the most truthful and influent supporters of GE crops. In 2005, Tabara was vice president of the Chamber of Deputies' agriculture committee and his mission was to convince Romanians to grow GE organisms. In 2006 legislation forbidden GE crops to be cultivated in protected areas and their surroundings, but Tabara was found to grow 300 ha of illegal soybeans. Other prominent politicians from the opposition were also found to grow illegally GE crops and they were sanctioned with tens of thousands of Euros and their crops had to be destroyed. Tabara was supported by the leading political party and he could use the yields without any sanctions.

<sup>1</sup> Euractiv, 04.05.2011 - EU farm chief: "GM food meets no quality, diversity criteria"

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/cap/eu-farm-chief-gm-food-meets-quality-diversity-criteria-news-504488>

<sup>2</sup> Grist, 19.04.2011 - USDA moves to let Monsanto perform its own environmental impact studies on GMOs

<http://www.grist.org/industrial-agriculture/2011-04-19-usda-to-let-monsanto-do-own-environmental-impact-studies-on-gmos>

<sup>3</sup> Adevarul, 03.05.2011 "For me, GMO products do not meet quality criteria"

[http://www.adevarul.ro/adevarul\\_europa/Exclusiv-Dacian-Ciolos-OMG-criteriilor\\_0\\_473952605.html](http://www.adevarul.ro/adevarul_europa/Exclusiv-Dacian-Ciolos-OMG-criteriilor_0_473952605.html)

<sup>4</sup> USDA Gain Report no. R00005 prepared by Holly Higgins/U.S.Embassy, 28.02.2000

<sup>5</sup> Antena 1 TV Station, 01.04.2010 - Observator: GMO Mafia

[http://observator.a1.ro/free/Mafia-organismelor-modificate-genetic\\_7817.html](http://observator.a1.ro/free/Mafia-organismelor-modificate-genetic_7817.html)

Under the US plan, Romania's role was to act as a launching pad of GE organisms to the West. The cable said that the embassy wanted to help Romania join the EU with a "strongly developed biotechnological industry" and a population that can understand the merits of biotechnology<sup>6</sup>. Tabara has been very ambitious and he became President of the Agriculture Committee. Starting September 2010 he was appointed Minister of Agriculture. He is not shy to include Monsanto in his CV and express his collaboration with the corporation up to date. He is confident that Monsanto and their supporters "are so big and so organized that they will control the world". Former Romanian Environmental Minister Attila Korodi who tried to ban cultivation of MON810 in 2008 had to understand in a very short time that "if you don't make a deal with them you disappear from the market"<sup>7</sup>.

Mr. Tabara is not alone in the Ministry. He is surrounded by loyal supporters. Adrian Radulescu, former President of LAPAR (The League of Associations of the Agriculture Producers in Romania) has declared himself a GMO fan and threatened to shoot a Greenpeace campaigner during a live show about GE crops at a national TV station. During his visit in Bucharest, Professor Giles Eric Seralini of University of Caen<sup>8</sup> also took part in the show. Mr. Radulescu called Seralini an impostor and challenged his doctorate diploma<sup>9</sup>. Shortly after the incident, Mr. Radulescu was promoted in the position of Director of Cabinet for the Agriculture Minister Dacian Ciolos and today he is the Secretary of State for Agriculture. Until a while ago, Mr. Nicolae Hristea, also part of the ministry administration made sure that GE crops find their way on Romanian soil. When a devoted replacement was found, he left the Ministry and started Agrobiotechrom, an Agriculture Association funded together with Monsanto to stand for the corporation's interests. In his new position Mr Hristea has successfully forced professors from The Academy of Economical Study in Bucharest to cancel the conference scheduled in October 2009 where Percy Schmeiser was advertised as the main speaker.

Schmeiser is a well known Canadian farmer standing against Monsanto since many years after his fields were contaminated with GE crops. When Mr Hristea had to start Agrobiotechrom he was successfully replaced from the administration of the ministry by Mrs Tatiana Preda who never misses major events to promote GE crops in Romania. She admits that her appetite for GE food is very high<sup>10</sup>.

#### 1.4. The Seeds of Hope

2005-2006, the only 2 years when the control over the agriculture ministry was lost by the corporations, are the years when the ban on cultivation of GE soya was enacted by Minister Flutur. Shortly after the decision was made, Flutur was replaced. His director of cabinet together with his family where under constant threat and had to go dark after the ban was enforced. He explains how the corporation seeks to take control over food prices and to obtain political or military advantages<sup>11</sup>.

In March 2008 Attila Korodi, Romania's environmental ministry, announced his intention to impose a national cultivation ban on Monsanto MON810 genetically modified maize<sup>12</sup>. He also advised farmers to avoid growing MON810 that year. At the same time he ordered to form a new Biosafety Commission. Its former members were acting under the influence of the biotech corporations. The new formed Commission was delegated to submit a scientific opinion by the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2008. This would support and validate the minister's decision stronger in front of the Government. The deadline was missed and the opinion came only in August. The delay gave space for mind change of the members. The President of the Biosafety Commission who publically supported the ban at the same event where Korodi made the announcement has put the stamp of approval on the paper where 11 members of the Commission consider that MON810 is safe for health and safe for the environment. Only 1 member has abstained. The failure of the Biosafety Commission and the lack of support from Agriculture Minister Dacian Ciolos (2008) have lead to a non decision.

<sup>6</sup> Bucharest Herald, 01.04.2011 - Wikileaks: Agriculture Ministry introduces genetically modified soy in people's diets

<http://www.bucharestherald.ro/dailyevents/41-dailyevents/21025-wikileaks-agriculture-ministry-introduces-genetically-modified-soy-in-peoples-diets>

<sup>7</sup> Antena 1 TV Station, 31.03.2010 - Observator: GM crops in Romanian fields

[http://observator.a1.ro/social/Plantele-modificate-genetic-castiga-teren-in-Roman\\_7748.html](http://observator.a1.ro/social/Plantele-modificate-genetic-castiga-teren-in-Roman_7748.html)

<sup>8</sup> Pr Gilles Eric Seralini, Molecular Biology Professor – President of the Scientific Board of CRIIGEN

[http://www.criigen.org/SiteEn/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=57&Itemid=105](http://www.criigen.org/SiteEn/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=57&Itemid=105)

<sup>9</sup> Romania Libera, 30.10.2007 – Scientific discussions with the gun against the head

<http://www.romanialibera.ro/opinii/comentarii/discutii-stiintifice-cu-pistolul-la-tampla-109939.html>

<sup>10</sup> Cearta intre specialisti pe tema organismelor modificate genetic

<http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/social/cearta-intre-specialisti-pe-tema-organismelor-modificate-genetic.html>

<sup>11</sup> Formula AS – When people plays God

<http://www.formula-as.ro/2008/802/ecologie-14/cand-oamenii-se-joaca-de-a-dumnezeu-9029>

<sup>12</sup> Reuters, 27.03.2008 - Romania mulls national ban on Monsanto maize

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2008/03/27/romania-monsanto-ban-idINL275539520080327>

The procedure was resumed in 2010 with a fresh blow from the new environmental minister Laszlo Borbely who has announced in September his intention to put a ban on cultivation of all GE organisms for the next 5 years in Romania. Valeriu Tabara, freshly appointed as Minister for Agriculture, has met Borbely and a new non decision was once again taken<sup>13</sup>. Lucia Varga, member of the Environmental Commission called for a similar moratorium in the Romanian Parliament in 2010. The debate in the Parliament is ongoing.

## 2. JUSTICE OF NGOS

### 2.1. The Romanian Public Rejects GE

A good orchestration of the biotech corporations can only be defeated by an organized civil society. When a corporation that values billions of USD plans to convince 70% of romanians to support GE crops<sup>14</sup>, while the latest polls show that 81.5% of them want to ban it, then two conclusions can be drawn: that NGOs are more efficient and that the public is more responsible and concerned.

According to a national opinion poll (Omnibus - made by IMAS) conducted in April 2010, 81.5% of Romanians want the Romanian authorities to ban GE crops and 74.1% don't want to consume it<sup>15</sup>.

### 2.2. Former Country Manager of Monsanto Criticizes GE

The first significant public opposition of GE took place in May 2003 when several national and international NGOs exposed Romania as a dumping ground for GE

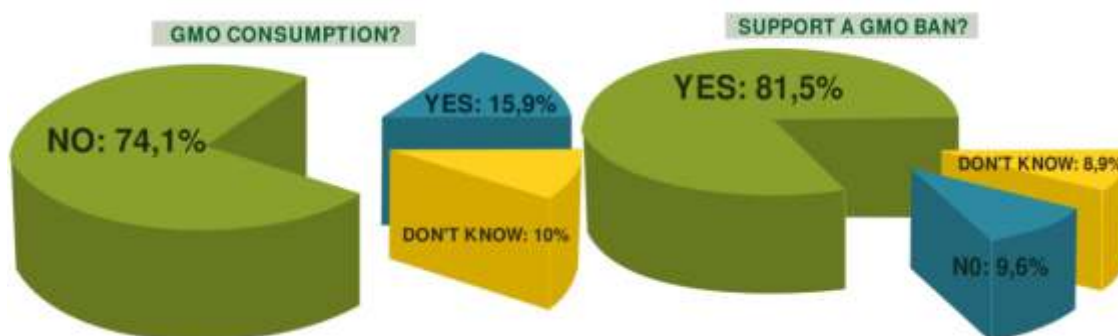
organisms during a large event in Bucharest. The event has deeply touched Dragos Dima jr. whose father was country manager for Monsanto by the time when the corporation decided to commercially grow GE soya in Romania. Following a father/son discussion, Dragos Dima who left the corporation in 1998 decided to start criticizing GE publicly<sup>16</sup>.

### 2.3. Locations of Cultivation of GE Crops Cannot Be Secret

In the following years NGOs have exposed several dozens of illegal cultivation and contamination in fields and showed that GE crops are completely out of control. For this reason, the Ministry of Agriculture has decided that locations for cultivation of GE crops is secret information. In 2009 Agent Green has taken the institution to court along with the National Agency for Environmental Protection (ANPM). Before the court decided, the Agency decided to publish the locations.

### 2.4. Illegal Contamination Thresholds for Seeds Fall in Court

A precedent was created in Romania regarding seed contamination thresholds. When EU Commission ordered member states not to set thresholds for adventitious presence of GMOs in conventional seeds, the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture decided that seeds of self-pollinating crops can be contaminated up to 0.5% with GE organisms and the seeds of allogame species can be contaminated up to 0.3%<sup>17</sup>. No difference has been made between authorized and unauthorized GE crops. The Ecological Club Transylvania has taken the ministry to Court and won quickly.



<sup>13</sup> Ministers clash over genetically modified plants. Valeriu Tabara opposes Borbely's planned 5-year ban

<http://www.bucharestherald.ro/economics/40-economics/15775-ministers-clash-over-genetically-modified-plants-valeriu-tabara-opposes-borbelys-planned-5-year-ban->

<sup>14</sup> Wikileaks – GE food: Romania was US Trojan horse in EU

[http://www.adevarul.ro/actualitate/wikileaks\\_despre\\_romania/Mancare\\_modificata\\_genetic\\_Romania\\_era\\_calul\\_troian\\_al\\_SUA\\_in\\_Europa\\_0\\_45355271.html](http://www.adevarul.ro/actualitate/wikileaks_despre_romania/Mancare_modificata_genetic_Romania_era_calul_troian_al_SUA_in_Europa_0_45355271.html)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.infomg.ro/web/en/Home/News/3/794>

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Dragos Dima, former Country Manager for Monsanto Romania

<sup>17</sup> DG SANCO mission report in Romania 2009-8138-MR:

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/ap/ap\\_romania\\_8138\\_2009.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/ap/ap_romania_8138_2009.pdf)

## 2.5. Contamination of the Scientific Community not Allowed by Justice

The lack of transparency regarding working reports of the Biosafety Commission was subject for another court case won by the Info Centre about GMOs (InfOMG) against National Agency for Environmental Protection. Still, Mrs. Elena Badea, who was publically exposed as being in conflict of interests regarding GE crops, continues to retain control during the Commission's meetings and aggressively insists for unanimity regarding safety of GE crops. Only one scientist opposed cultivation of MON810, profesor Maxim of University of Cluj. Mrs Badea insists that Mr Maxim should leave the Commission.

## 2.6. Retailers Go GE free, Producers Starts the „Green Attack”

Several contamination cases of food products with GE soy sold in large retail chains have been published by NGOs in the last 5 years. Following a case when at Carefour the bread produced by Snack Attack was accidentally contaminated with 1.11% GE soya<sup>18</sup>, all retail chains operating in Romania published their policy on the issue. Most of them went GE free. Today Snack Attack is the first Romanian company producing the certified organic sandwich „Green Attack”<sup>19</sup>.

# 3.EU TALKS

## 3.1. Member States Ban GE Crops

Austria was the first Member State to ban cultivation of GE crops in 1998. Today only 5 out of 27 Member States allows biotech products on their soil. Following enforcement of EU Directive 2001/18/EC other Member States established national bans invoking the safeguard clause according to Article 23. Several independent scientific studies were brought to the attention of the EU Commission by France, Hungary, Germany, Bulgaria, Greece and Luxembourg when they banned cultivation of Monsanto's GE maize MON810. Yet the EU Commission challenged the bans in these countries several times. However, but the Council of Ministers proved to be loyal to their decision and supported each other every time. No ban has been yet

overruled even after the European Court of Justice's attorney general said on March 2011 that France's ban was illegal<sup>20</sup>.

Forced by WTO, the EU Commission wants to speed up the authorization process for GE crops, while several Member States insists that the current risk assessment process is weak and offers very limited possibilities for a safe ban. A significant change in policy making can be observed since 2010 when new Commissioners were appointed. While DG Environment and DG Agriculture became silent on the GE topic, DG SANCO has taken over the lead on the issue. Europe's health and consumer affairs Commissioner John Dalli has rehearsed a Commission proposal to give member states new rights to ban GMO cultivation. Dacian Ciolos, the EU Commissioner for Agriculture agrees with the proposal as presented by President Barroso<sup>21</sup>. As a consumer, Ciolos believes that the EU should not count on possible performance of GE crops but on diversity and quality of local products. His choice is always made in order to meet these two criteria that do not fit together with GE crops<sup>22</sup>.

The justifications for a ban on the cultivation of GE crops as proposed by the European Commission has been considered as “a good basis for discussion” at most by member states, but they consider them to be still “too vague”. Meeting in Brussels on March 14 the EU's environment ministers further highlighted what they saw as the inadequacies of the document proposed by the Commission<sup>23</sup>.

The Commission's proposal does not give details on which grounds an EU Member State can justify a restriction or a ban but narrows the options by excluding any possible health or environmental effects. This also means that, in contrast to Directive 2001/18/EC (Art. 23) new scientific evidence cannot serve as a ground for measures to restrict or ban cultivation of GE crops. This leaves the Member States with a rather limited spectrum of possible arguments, such as effects on agriculture and other ethical reasons<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Greenpeace, 23.10.2007 - All go for European GM campaigns

[http://weblog.greenpeace.org/makingwaves/archives/2007/10/all\\_go\\_for\\_european\\_gm\\_campaign.html](http://weblog.greenpeace.org/makingwaves/archives/2007/10/all_go_for_european_gm_campaign.html)

<sup>19</sup> Green Attack, the first Romanian sandwich line - organic certified

[http://www.realitatea.net/agent-green-a-lansat-prima-gama-de-sandwich-uri-certificate-eco-din-romania\\_801319.html](http://www.realitatea.net/agent-green-a-lansat-prima-gama-de-sandwich-uri-certificate-eco-din-romania_801319.html)

<sup>20</sup> EU court official: French ban on GMO maize illegal:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/03/22/us-eu-gmo-idUSTRE72L60J20110322>

<sup>21</sup> Adevarul, 01.03.2010 – Culita Tarata, the King of mutant maize:

[http://www.adevarul.ro/actualitate/eveniment/Culita\\_Tarata-regele\\_porumbului\\_mutant\\_0\\_217178801.html](http://www.adevarul.ro/actualitate/eveniment/Culita_Tarata-regele_porumbului_mutant_0_217178801.html)

<sup>22</sup> Euractiv, 04.05.2011 - EU farm chief: GM food meets no quality, diversity criteria

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/cap/eu-farm-chief-gm-food-meets-quality-diversity-criteria-news-504488>

<sup>23</sup> Europolitics, 14.03.2011 - Proposed criteria for GMO ban “too vague”:

<http://www.europolitics.info/sectorial-policies/proposed-criteria-for-gmo-ban-too-vague-art298271-11.html>

<sup>24</sup> Austrian Ministry for Health Study: Possibilities for justification of a ban on GMO cultivation regarding the proposal for a Regulation from the European Commission submitted in July 2010

<http://tinyurl.com/6gesrdw>

### 3.2. EFSA Reform

The European Food Authority's (EFSA) has drafted new guidelines on the risk assessment of GE crops that would become an official part of EU regulations. These guidelines have been heavily criticized from many sides. However, the EU Commission is planning to use these guidelines. Current EU regulations protect consumers and the environment because they are based on the precautionary principle. The new EFSA guidelines don't offer the same level of protection and they are rather oriented to the interests of industry according to several NGOs.<sup>25</sup> That's why Commissioner John Dalli had to endure a barrage of criticism from delegates at the 2010 GMO-Free Regions Conference held in Brussels where he had to admit in front of the delegates that the risk assessment process conducted by the EFSA is weak and needs to be reformed.<sup>26</sup>

### 3.3. The CAP Reform and the Protein Debate as Trojan Horse for GE

EU faces a dramatic lack of protein crop production. The deficit dates since 1992 when the Blair House Agreement between the EU and the US was signed. This agreement allows the EU to protect its cereal production and in return to allow duty-free imports of oilseed and protein crops to enter Europe. Shortly after this, the European farmers and local processing business have lost interest and knowledge in such crops due to severe competitive disadvantages. In many cases protein crops such as soy are perceived as luxury crops in EU. The dependency on imports and rising feed prices make the EU livestock sector extremely vulnerable to price volatility and trade distortions, with feed price raises increasing farmers' production costs and squeezing the sector's profitability. This is why German Green MEP Martin Häusling has started a wide debate in the EU Parliament. He insists that "farmers suffer from increasing prices for feed because of speculation in agricultural markets. Production of more local feed would lead to more independence and higher income

for farmers as well as better animal health and meat and milk quality".<sup>27</sup>

Current EU deficit is so high that EU is forced to import over 40 million tones of protein crops (mainly soy and corn gluten feed) every year. This represents 80% of the Union's crop protein consumption. The entire EU protein crop production (dried pulses, soybeans, etc.) represents currently only 3% of the EU's arable land. In terms of land use, EU protein crop imports represent 10% of the EU's arable land or 20 million ha.

For this reason, the protein deficit has become a priority issue for the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Lawmakers expect legislative proposals on reforming the EU's CAP in September 2011 to include protein crops in new policy measures and instruments to support farmers in improving crop rotation systems. Nobody says yet that the protein crops must be GE free. Therefore the biotech corporations believe this is the best niche for them to enter the EU market in force. The Trojan horse is Romania, where minister Tabara has already made all necessary steps at EU levels, in order for GE soy to be approved for cultivation starting 2012<sup>28</sup>. Minister Tabara has participated actively at the "Talks about GMOs – The Truth about GMOs" conference organized by Romanian news agency Mediafax. Only politicians and members of the Romanian Academy that are in favor of GMOs took part at this event. In this audience Tabara claimed that "Romania could grow about two million of tons of soy. It is the only European country that can grow this plant at an industrial level". With this production Romania alone could reduce EU's imports of protein with 2.5% only with soy. However, the minister wishes that this soy is GE. "Romania every year imports about 500,000 tons of GE soy from Brasil, the United States and other countries every year. It is unacceptable that we are allowed to consume this poison but that we are not allowed to produce it"<sup>29</sup>. Data provided by the National Customs Authority shows that Romania imported only 14,238 tons in 2010 which is significantly different from the minister's statements.

<sup>25</sup> Test Biotech, 01.03.2010 - EU Commission to dump risk assessment of genetically engineered plants?:

<http://www.testbiotech.org/en/node/334>

<sup>26</sup> GMO free region, 16.09.2010 - Commissioner Dalli admits EU food safety regime must change:

[http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/fileadmin/pics/gmo-free-regions/conference\\_2010/press/Commissioner%20Dalli%20admits%20EU%20food%20safety%20regime%20must%20change.pdf](http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/fileadmin/pics/gmo-free-regions/conference_2010/press/Commissioner%20Dalli%20admits%20EU%20food%20safety%20regime%20must%20change.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Euractiv, 10.03.2011 - MEPs want to end 'protein deficit' for EU livestock:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/cap/meps-want-protein-deficit-eu-livestock-news-502925>

<sup>28</sup> Nine o'clock, 08.04.2011 – Agriculture minister: Romania asks EU to allow gm soy growth as of 2012

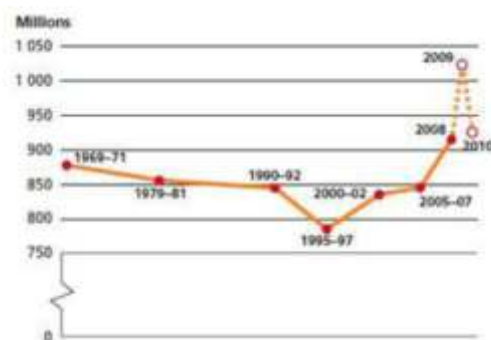
<http://www.nineoclock.ro/agriculture-minister-romania-asks-eu-to-allow-gm-soy-growth-as-of-2012/>

<sup>29</sup> EU Business, 07.04.2011 - Romanian agriculture minister pleads for GM soy

<http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/romania-food-farm.9fl/>

### 4.1. Organic Farming Can Double Yields, GE Crops Cannot

Over a decade ago, Monsanto tried to convince the world that GE crops are the solution to feed the world. At that time the number of hungry people was below 800 million, the lowest value in the last century. Now that GE crops occupy 1 billion hectares of the planet, the number of hungry people increased for the first time up to 1 billion.



Evolution of Hungry people 1969 – 2010 / Source: FAO

With such results, the biotech industry had to regroup its communication strategy. Today they claim to have the solution for major global crises, world hunger and climate change<sup>30</sup>.

The U.N. took the lead to show that reality in the fields is different than the biotech industry claims. Convinced that organic farming that mimics nature can yield far more than any GE crop that mimic industrial processes, Olivier De Schutter (U.N. Special Rapporteur) has started 44 long-term projects in 20 sub-Saharan African countries (one of the poorest parts of the world). The results showed that eco-farming could double food production in within 10 years while mitigating climate change<sup>31</sup>.

In Romania, the value of organic agricultural production expands continuously. Retail products are becoming more widely available, and local

consumption has slightly increased. A reduction of the VAT for food (currently 24%) and an increase in diversity of domestic organic ingredients for final products could increase the local consumption even more<sup>32</sup>. 260,000 ha of farmland were cultivated organically. Exports continue to account for 90% of the value of Romania's organic production. The first organic specialty shop opened in Romania in 2007 and has reached 18 in 2011. 120 shops are also selling certified organic products. During the period 2007-2013, Romanian farmers have access to 390 million USD from the EU funds. Farmland cultivated organically is expected to grow at least another 10% and domestic consumption to double in less than 5 years<sup>33</sup>.

Romania's organic agricultural law is based on a collection of ministerial orders, parliamentary decisions and emergency ordinances. The resulting regulatory body requires independent organizations, approved by the Organic ("Ecological") Agriculture Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, to conduct initial certifications and regular inspections to guarantee that all principles laid out in applicable ordinances are being followed on farms and processing facilities. Currently there are 18 certification bodies operating in Romania. Producers have commented that the resulting competition has driven certification and inspection prices to very low levels.

Before certification, farms must undergo a conversion period during which organic principles are implemented to reduce non-approved input residues in the fields. Due to minimal use of fertilizers and pesticides on Romanian farmland over the past fifteen years, reduced transition periods are frequently offered to potential producers. While farmers in EU countries can face transition periods of five or six years, a typical conversion period in Romania is as low as one or two years. As a result, the potential for rapid growth in the sector is significant<sup>34</sup>.

Indicator	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number of registered organic producers	3409	3834	4191	3228	4322
Total surface used for organic agriculture (hectares)	143194	190129	221411	240000	260000

The Dynamic of producers and surfaces with organic agriculture in Romania<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Common ground, 01.09.2010 - Greenwashing biotech

[http://www.commonground.ca/iss/230/cg230\\_biotech.shtml](http://www.commonground.ca/iss/230/cg230_biotech.shtml)

<sup>31</sup> IPS News, 08.03.2011 - Save Climate and Double Food Production With Eco-Farming

<http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=54775>

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Oana Suciuc, Business Development Director & Partner CANAH Green Living – 14.01.2011

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Ionut Teglas, General Manager Bio Solaris – 08.04.2011<sup>34</sup> Gabriela Istudor, 01.02.2008 – Policy and Governance of GE crops in Romania

<sup>34</sup> Gabriela Istudor, 01.02.2008 – Policy and Governance of GE crops in Romania

<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, 02.11.2010 – The Dynamic of producers and surfaces with organic agriculture in Romania

<http://www.madr.ro/pages/page.php?self=01&sub=0107&tz=010710>

## 4.2. GE Crops Fails in Fields and Causes Trouble to Farmers

For several years the ministry for agriculture kept confidentiality of the records for cultivation of Monsanto's GE maize MON810. Agent Green took legal steps in 2009 against the ministry and the National Agency for Environmental Protection to make this information available for the public. In the meanwhile the organization has started investigations and found records of cultivation of MON810 in Iasi County in 2007. This GE maize was destroyed completely by drought<sup>36</sup>. The farmer did not use GE seeds again after the incident.

IASI  
MINISTERUL AGRICULTURII, PADURILOR SI DEZVOLTARII RURALE  
Directia pentru Agricultura si Dezvoltare Rurala Iasi  
IASI, B-dul Stefan cel Mare si Sfant, nr. 67-69, sect. 1 - 71004  
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E-mail: csa@agricultura.gov.ro, ssa@agricultura.gov.ro

Nr. 1/11.05.2007

**AUTORIZATIE**  
pentru cultivarea plantelor modificate genetic in anul 2007

In temeiul art. 12 din Ordonanta Ministerului Agriculturii, Padurilor si Dezvoltarii Rurala nr. 237/2008 privind autorizarea cultivatorilor de plante modificate genetic, se autorizeaza cultivatorul de plante modificate genetic in scop de:

☐ cercetare  
☐ productie de samanta  
☐ consum

Specia modificata genetic: **MON810** CNP: 442-16  
Suprafata estimata: **100** ha  
Locatia: **Com. Prundu, Jud. Giurgiu**

A. Persoana fizica: \_\_\_\_\_ cu domiciliul in localitatea \_\_\_\_\_ nr. \_\_\_\_\_ judet/sectorul \_\_\_\_\_ (comuna/povara/strada B.U.C.I. este \_\_\_\_\_ emisa/valida de \_\_\_\_\_ in data de \_\_\_\_\_ CNP \_\_\_\_\_

B. Persoana juridica: **SC AGRIMARVAS SRL** cu sediul (scopul si activitatea) in localitatea \_\_\_\_\_ nr. \_\_\_\_\_ judet/sectorul \_\_\_\_\_ CNP \_\_\_\_\_ reprezentata de **ISARESCU PRUNDU** in calitate de reprezentant legal, posesor/comasor al B.U.C.I. serie **MX** nr. **036014** emisa/valida de **ROMANIA IASI** in data de **11.05.2007** CNP **2696601572731**

Cultivatorul este obligat sa anunte entitatea pentru autorizatie despre orice modificare intervenita in documentele de autorizare, in termen de 15 zile de la producerea modificarilor.

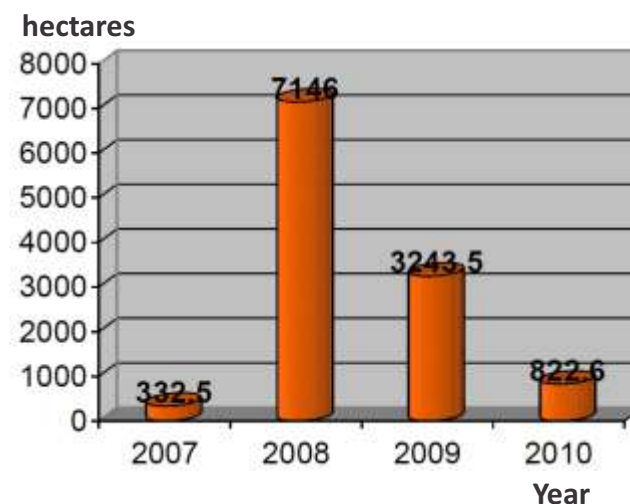
11.05.2007

Director, Serviciu de Autorizatii  
Ing. Aureliu Gulea

Due to draught MON810 was 100% destroyed

Locations for cultivation of MON810 have been made available by the National Agency for Environmental Protection starting the end of the year 2009. Data from 2010 were made available by the ministry of agriculture. Both data shows that cultivation of MON810 decreased dramatically since its introduction in Romania.

## Evolution of surface cultivated with MON810



Culita Tarata, known as the „King of GMOs” (owner of the largest farm land in Romania) has used 1150 of his hectares in 2009 for MON810. He stopped growing MON810 completely in 2010. He invoked better prices for GE free maize.

In the same season the average production of conventional maize was 720 kg/ha in Iasi where crops were hit by the same drought. There are no scientific studies available to show the reasons for GE maize to yield less than conventional varieties.

In Botosani (a neighboring county to Iasi) a farmer took Monsanto to court for crop failure after 150 ha cultivated with MON810 were lost. None of the crops reached the maturity in order to be harvested in year 2008<sup>37</sup>. The average national production of conventional maize in 2008 was 3.21 tones/ha.

Another usual client of Monsanto, Catalin Corbea (mayor of Prundu village in Giurgiu County) used 300 ha of his farm land for cultivation of MON810 in 2009. In 2010 he quit „the GE invention for not being money-making, but rather trouble causing, taking in consideration all the problems and the side effects”<sup>38</sup>. The total surface cultivated with maize in 2010 in Romania was 2,28 million ha. Except the 822 ha of MON810, the rest of maize was GE free.

<sup>36</sup> Authorization no.1/11.05.2007 for MON810 granted by Iasi County Department for Agriculture and Rural Development to SC Agrimarvas SRL

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Cristian Delibas, Director of Botosani County Department for Agriculture and Rural Development – 06.10.2010

<sup>38</sup> Antena 1 TV Station, 31.03.2010 - Observator: GM crops in Romanian fields

[http://observator.a1.ro/social/Plantele-modificate-genetic-castiga-teren-in-Roman\\_7748.html](http://observator.a1.ro/social/Plantele-modificate-genetic-castiga-teren-in-Roman_7748.html)

326 contamination incidents with GE crops have been reported around the world in the last 5 years<sup>39</sup>. The contamination can occur in fields, seeds, food and feed due to wind, birds, insects, human negligence or even by intention. Human negligence seems to be a convenient escape for genetic polluters in several recent cases that involve illegal cultivation of GE potatoes of BASF in Sweden<sup>40</sup> or Monsanto's maize<sup>41</sup> and soya in Romania. No legal or financial penalties have been charged for these companies or their clients when they invoked negligence. So far, the EU Commission seems to tolerate such practices even if MON810 was found to be illegally grown in the territory of Natura 2000 site and Biosphere Reserve Danube Delta.

The first record of transgenic plants filed trials in Romania is dated in 1996 when about 120 GM plum trees were planted in Bistrita County. Cultivation of herbicide tolerant soya has started 1 year later and pest resistant potatoes in 1999. No legislation for deliberate release of GE crops in the environment was in place before 2000. After this year farmers were obligated to declare their GE crops that were centralized in the national registry. The register was made public and NGOs could show that many farmers save seeds from one year to another and they don't declare when they grow GE crops or they declare less. In only a few years the commercial cultivation of GE soy went totally out of control. By 2005 Greenpeace has investigated and published massive illegal fields in 10 different counties of Romania<sup>42</sup>. Other 3 cases have been exposed in 2006 when more than 140,000 ha have been covered by GE soya. GE free soy in fields became a rarity. Due to lack of control and the upcoming accession in the EU the Romanian Government has banned cultivation of GE soya starting 2007. A mission carried out by the EU Commission in April 2007 revealed that 227 farmers were still cultivating illegal GM soy on 8,100 hectares<sup>43</sup>. Other 59 ha of illegal GE soy have been found in the 2008 mission<sup>44</sup>. A contamination case has been exposed by Agent Green in Calarasi Country in 2009

and another one in Botosani County in 2010<sup>45</sup>. "The decontamination process is likely to take years. Romania may also become a test case to see whether GM crop-plant decontamination is possible at all" said Dragos Dima, former country manager of Monsanto Romania back in 2006 after leaving the company<sup>46</sup>. Five years later, the facts show that he was right with the timing. Partial decontamination is certitude, but isolated cases of genetic pollution still occur.

As the organic agriculture spreads, the fear of contamination raises among the farmers. Professor Toncea, President of the National Federation for Organic Farming worries mostly of MON810 whose pollen can be easily taken by wind and insects to the neighboring GE free maize fields. In Romania it is allowed to grow GE maize as close as only 200m away from organic or conventional maize. This buffer zone is not comfortable for Toncea who anticipates that Romanian farmers risks compromising their harvest and exports<sup>47</sup>. He remembers the massive contamination with GE soy that occurred before the ban in Romania and he knows that MON810 has caused a drastic reduction in organic cultivations of this grain in Catalonia and Aragon (Spain), and is making their coexistence practically impossible (the area devoted to organic maize was reduced by 75% in Aragon from 2004 due to contamination cases)<sup>48</sup>. Small farmers know the power corporations hold and the troubles they can cause but nothing can stop Willy Schuster, the owner of few dozens of hectares in Sibiu country. He likes to call himself David when he is fighting the Goliath of biotech, Monsanto. The farmer is convinced that coexistence of GE crops with conventional and organic agriculture was always a one way option. Coexistence was just a Trojan horse created by the mafia of Monsanto to contaminate conventional and organic agriculture forever. Schuster has been demanding from several ministers to ban MON810 and he proudly shows to his visitors the maize breeds that he created himself and that he grows organically. "My maize is dark yellow and full of life and nutrients. Some plants are small, others are tall. They have personality! I have adapted it to this soil and weather. My neighbor's industrial maize is pale yellow and all the same size. It has no personality", claims Schuster<sup>49</sup>. Farmers like Willy are not alone. As the agriculture land used with organic certified practices is increasing in Romania and throughout Europe, more and more farmers and associations stands up and defend their soil against the biotech industry.

<sup>39</sup> GM Contamination Register

<http://www.gmcontaminationregister.org/index.php?content=default>

<sup>40</sup> The Local, 25.09.2010 - BASF learns cause of Swedish potato mix-up

<http://www.thelocal.se/29242/20100925/>

<sup>41</sup> Document 117086/29.05.2008 issued by Ministry for Agriculture Romania

<sup>42</sup> Gabriel Paun, 11.01.2006 - GE soy cultivation: out of control in Romania, Repor

<sup>43</sup> DG SANCO Mission Report 2007-7186-MR carried out in Romania

<sup>44</sup> DG SANCO Mission Report 2009-8138-MR carried out in Romania

<sup>45</sup> Antena 1 TV Station, 07.10.2010 - Observator: Romanian field with GM soya

[http://observator.a1.ro/free/Camp-romanes-cu-soia-modificata-genetic\\_20959.html](http://observator.a1.ro/free/Camp-romanes-cu-soia-modificata-genetic_20959.html)

<sup>46</sup> ENS, 30.10.2006 - Romania Harvests Trouble With Its GM Crops

<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/oct2006/2006-10-30-04.html>

<sup>47</sup> Adevarul, 01.03.2010 - Culita Tarata, The King of GMOs

[http://www.adevarul.ro/actualitate/eveniment/Culita\\_Tarata-regele\\_porumbului\\_mutant\\_0\\_217178801.html](http://www.adevarul.ro/actualitate/eveniment/Culita_Tarata-regele_porumbului_mutant_0_217178801.html)

<sup>48</sup> An impossible Coexistence: Transgenic and organic agriculture; Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain

<http://www.alphagalileo.org/ViewItem.aspx?ItemId=5153&CultureCode=en>

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Willy Schuster, 10.09.2009

## 6.CONCLUSION

Romania is a major European agricultural country. With a 15 years old history on cultivation of GE crops the country is now the test case for decontamination. The biotech industry is well connected and settled within the Government, Parliament, Scientific Community, press and farmer associations. Yet, an efficient civil society and a few brave politicians have overthrown the overwhelming corporate influence by taking a U turn. Cultivation of GE soy has been banned in 2006 and the fate of MON810 has been decided by the farmers, who have concluded that this crop is not money-making, but trouble causing. When 81.5% of all Romanians demand for a national ban on GE crops, the retailers do not sell any labeled GE food and producers goes for organic “Green Attack” only another U turn could reverse the situation. The fact that the biotech industry has spread its influence into the chair of the ministry of agriculture, such a change is no longer enough when even the EU farming chief believes that GE food meets no quality criteria. As no GE crop brought performance but rather disappointments the EU Commission has to look for a future CAP where there is no space for GE protein. Consumers refuses GE, retailers are listening and politicians start to follow the greens. It is a long battle, but this is the final round between GE and organic agriculture in Europe and it is taking place on Romanian soil, right now.







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**grassroots  
foundation**