International Workshop

on the consequences of the ECJ judgement on GM pollen in honey for GM crop releases and cultivation in Germany and the EU

Berlin, December 13-14, 2011

WG3: Statement

Luis E. Martínez Senties
Ag. Counselor, Ministry of Agriculture of Mexico (SAGARPA-ASERCA), Mission of Mexico to the EU, Belgium
STATEMENT MEXICO

International workshop on the consequences of the ECJ judgement on GM pollen in honey

Judgment of European Court of Justice of 6 September 2011 on honey containing pollen derived from a GMO (C442/09)

Thank you Chair

Ladies and Gentlemen

We would like thank The Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection of Germany for the invitation to this International Workshop and Delegates present in this Working group.

Also, we would like to extend our concern over the European Court of Justice Judgment of the 6 of September 2011 on honey containing pollen derived from a GMO.

Mexico and other exporting countries recognize that the European Commission (EC) and all EU member states have accounted the implications and consequences of such ruling, in honey importations and its whole supply within the EU. We are also aware that the EC and all Member states understand Mexico’s and other important exporting countries concern, therefore assessing all legal and legislative instruments in order to overreact on eventual problems.

One of the key reactions appreciated is that the EC has requested to all Member States to abstain in adopting any immediate measures until there are no harmonized and consulted schemes applicable as a result of the ruling.

In this respect, I would like to remind that in Mexico and other exporting countries only certain GMO plantings are authorized and these are based on scientific and controlled environment projects. Nevertheless, our honey market has been severely hurt and the negative impacts have been felt particularly over small and low income beekeepers. For Mexico it is a very sensible and important subject, since our country is one of the five main suppliers of honey to the EU.

Mexico honey production accounts for a total of 1.9 million beehives out of more than 42,000 beekeepers, which in their greater percentage are marginal and low income. Over the last 8 years Mexico has produced an average of 57,000 tons of honey engaging within the 5th and 6th position of world honey production, making the state of Yucatan it’s larger producer with an average of 10,000 tons. Out of the 57,000 tons produced, 25,000 are exported, mainly destined to Germany (16,500
tons), UK (3,000 tons) CH (2,000), USA (1,600) and Saudi Arabia (1,200), making it a total in value of more than 55 million US dollars, (42 million euros).

In this sense, our Competent Authorities have organized several meetings with stakeholders and the National Beekeepers Association in order to assess and evaluate the impacts over our National Beekeepers, particularly its consequences. A very important meeting will be held tomorrow in Mexico City for a situation they urgently need to understand.

One of these main consequences is that various European honey buyers are requesting Mexican honey exporter’s analysis or tests results that may guarantee a free GMO honey. More frightening is that within these requests there are some that mention that according to EU legislation, pollen is an ingredient of honey and that any presence of GMO in honey will be a condition for rejection.

As turns out, this is a major consequence since arranging many GMO analyses is resulting in considerable additional costs. As several companies have already expressed, GMO screening ranges between 100 and 150 euros, and more detailed analysis may end up costing far more. The cost are becoming disproportionate, thus affecting directly into prices of honey and making honey production no longer affordable.

Mexico has brought this subject to its SPS Special Committee between the EU and Mexico and has supported Argentina on its concern given at the WTO SPS Committee in which we again asked the EC to consider the consequences and implications of this ruling and reassure that any measure would not become a disposition that may restrict or limits our honey export to the EU. It is important to mention that during October our Competent Authorities have prepared a questionnaire addressed to the EC concerning the application of methods that may be pertinent to the ruling.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mexico and other exporting countries trust that in the frame of forums like this one, openly, we can encounter clarifications and certainty to this situation. We are sure that during this workshop on this interesting and sensible subject, your deliberations would be constructive in order to enhance and facilitate our trade.

It is our desire for a rapid response and clear and transparent position that may allow the sector a factual and real marketing of honey.

Muchas gracias!