



The European Parliament has said no to the Commission's controversial proposed seed regulation.

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During the plenary session in Strasbourg, the text was almost unanimously rejected (15 yes votes, 650 no votes and 13 abstentions), in line with the outcome of last month's vote by the European Parliament's Agriculture Commission. "The new regulations on seed marketing will be one of the most important items on the agenda during Italy's six-month EU presidency," commented Cinzia Scaffidi, director of the Slow Food Study Center. "They must find a way to regulate and mitigate a market that currently unjustifiably penalizes precisely those who are protecting the heritage that the multinationals also draw on."

If approved, the package of regulations would have entailed a mass of further bureaucracy falling on the shoulders of European farmers, particularly affecting the small-scale agriculture that we need to realize must become our future. Italy's recently appointed Agriculture Minister, Maurizio Martina, was also satisfied, telling the Agrapress agency: "We are happy with the decision taken today by the European Parliament because it rejects proposed regulation that aimed to unite complex and very different sectors such as seeds, fruit propagation, viticulture and forestry. It is now necessary to work towards a new legislative proposal which must be redesigned in order to respect the different circumstances of the various sectors involved and bring real improvements for all producers, consumers and the environment."

The discussion will now move to the Council, where we hope the clear position expressed by the Parliament will be respected. Alternatively the Council could propose an amended text to the Parliament, but in any case the text rejected by the Parliament will no longer be considered. We need a clear stand against the increase of costs and bureaucratic burdens that the proposed law on seeds would bring for small-scale seed producers, propagators, farmers and nurserymen. If the same formalities are required to sell seeds that are often only in demand locally and a new carrot cultivar patented by a Dutch giant, clearly the differences have not been adequately considered. Fairness must be applied to ensure that equality does not lead to injustice. "We must encourage farmers to register traditional varieties, which is free and easy," added Scaffidi. "It's a way of understanding our biodiversity, but also protecting it, because anything that is registered can no longer be patented. But at the same time it is absurd to maintain the ban on cultivation—in limited areas and quantities—of unregistered varieties. We have to regain a sense of the extraordinary importance of the heritage of traditional seeds, including at a regulatory level."