EU PARLIAMENT CLARIFIES LABELING RULES FOR GM POLLEN IN HONEY

On 3 June 2014, Directive 2014/63/EU\(^1\) of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 2001/110/EC\(^2\) relating to honey was published in the Official Journal. The directive defines pollen as a natural constituent of honey, rather than an ingredient. This means that Genetically Modified (GM) pollen has only to be labeled if it makes up more than 0.9% of the honey.

Current legislation did not state explicitly whether pollen in honey is a constituent or an ingredient. As we reported in a former Safeguard\(^3\) the European Court of Justice sought to clarify this in a ruling in September 2011 which defined pollen as an “ingredient” of honey, thereby requiring producers to indicate “pollen” in a list of ingredients on the label of the product. As a result of this definition:

- GM pollen has to be labeled if it makes up more than 0.9% of pollen.
- Honey is not marketable in European Union Member States if it contains pollen from GM plants which are not authorized to be used as ingredients in honey.

With pollen defined as a constituent of honey, current EU legislation on labelling applies, which states that GMOs must be indicated if they are present as a quantity of more than 0.9% of the honey (and not of the pollen). However, since pollen only forms around 0.5 % of any batch of honey, it will not exceed the labelling threshold.

\(^1\) 2014/63/EU
\(^2\) 2001/110/EC
\(^3\) former Safeguard
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