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## Poland to Ban Monsanto GMO Maize Seed

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POLAND: March 23, 2005

**WARSAW - Poland wants to ban the import and planting of 17 varieties of genetically modified (GMO) maize seed made by US biotech giant Monsanto for two years, a senior Farm Ministry official said on Tuesday.**

The EU newcomer will soon notify its plan to ban the seed, made from a parent seed known as MON 810, to the European Commission and expects a decision within one to two months, said Wieslaw Podyma, deputy director at the ministry's plant protection department.

Poland is the second central European country to ban a GMO maize type after Hungary, which outlawed the planting of Monsanto's MON 810 hybrid seeds in January.

While MON 810 is permitted across the 25-nation bloc, individual countries have discretion on whether to allow it and other gene-altered crops on their national territory.

"We are not yet announcing a ban. We are going to submit a motion to ban the imports and trading of 17 types of genetically modified MON 810 seeds for two years," Podyma said. "The ban will be introduced if Brussels approves this.

"Our motion was prepared on a different basis than in the case of Hungary. We have had no field experience related to these types of maize in Poland," he added.

Hungary banned biotech seed planting pending tests to establish whether GMO crops contaminated other crops and said old stocks must be destroyed, although it will continue to allow GMO maize in food production.

No GMO crops are yet grown in Poland, where maize production reached around 2.3 million tonnes last year.

Environmental lobby group Greenpeace welcomed Poland's decision and called on all EU member states to take action to prevent cultivation of gene crops in Europe.

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Opponents of the genetic modification have expressed concern that the new EU countries, many of them relatively poor ex-communist states, could provide a back door for GMO production -- a claim strongly denied by the biotech industry.

In the late 1990s, Austria, France, Greece, Italy and Luxembourg imposed national bans on a number of GMO products.

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