

# EU freezes approval of GM crops to 2014

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The European Commission has decided to freeze the approval process for genetically modified food crops through the end of its mandate next year while it works towards an agreement with EU member states.

"The Commission, if it wants, could launch a procedure to authorise the farming of one GM soya and six corn strains... but it won't do so," said Frederic Vincent, a spokesman for Health Commissioner Tonio Borg.

"The authorisations for farming are frozen," he added.

Vincent said the priority of Borg, who only recently took up the post of health commissioner, was to relaunch discussions with member states.

The Commission's approval of GM crops has poisoned relations with a number of the 27 EU members.

Eight countries -- Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg and Poland -- have adopted provisions that allow them to block the cultivation of GM crops on their territory.

European Commission chief Jose Manuel Barroso has not forced the countries to lift their safeguards.

In 14 years, the EU has approved the cultivation of just two types of genetically altered food crops for humans, the Amflora potato developed by German group BASF and MON810 maize developed by global seeds giant Monsanto.

The Amflora potato was a commercial flop, while the renewal of the authorisation of MON810 has been dragging along since 2007.

Vincent said renewal of MON810 was being held up by the Commission's freeze.

However the MON810 can continue to be cultivated in states which allow it until the Commission takes a decision.

Some 50 different genetically modified crops for animal consumption have been approved for use in the EU.

*SOURCE Agence France Presse AFP*