



The Representatives  
of the Member States  
of the European Union

Joint letter of the organisations  
Corporate Europe Observatory and Testbiotech

15 May 2012

Dear Sir or Madam

*Management Board of EFSA*

We are writing to you about the case of Mella Frewen, who was nominated by the European Commission to the EFSA Management Board. Mella Frewen's previous positions include Director for Government Affairs, Europe, Middle East & Africa, for Monsanto, where she dealt with a number of issues including agricultural biotechnology and agro-chemistry.

Frewen has been the chief lobbyist at the food industry lobby group FoodDrinkEurope (previously known as the CIAA) since 2007, where she actively lobbied to allow contamination of the food chain with genetically engineered plants which were not authorised in Europe. EFSA has not even evaluated the safety of these GMOs. She argued that it would be "a threat to industry" if this kind of contamination was not allowed in the EU.

We believe that the appointment of Mella Frewen will create conflicts of interest within the food agency's management board. As you know, the management board plays an important role in EFSA, approving its working program and deciding which scientists are on the expert panels. Crucially, the Board establishes internal rules on conflicts of interest at the Authority.

It is simply absurd that the Commission has nominated someone who has been actively lobbying to weaken current GMO legislation to the EFSA management board. In general, there is no justification for industry lobbyists being on the board of EFSA, since it is supposed to be the 'independent voice of science'.

Appointing a food lobbyist with a past history of lobbying to allow contamination with genetically engineered plants would seriously undermine public trust in the European Food Safety Authority. There is simply no justification for lobbyists from industry to be on the EFSA board. On the contrary, action needs to be taken, including fundamental changes to EFSA's founding regulations. The regulations need to be revised to ensure that people with links to industry do not hold EFSA management positions. Instead, there should be more representatives from consumer and environmental organisations on the board. These organisations have

no benefit from the products that EFSA assesses. The Commission has started to revise the founding regulations, but does not seem to take this issue into account.

The European Parliament has already opposed the choice to nominate Ms Frewen. The decision of the European Parliament on 10 of May to postpone granting discharge of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) budget for the year 2010 shows again that it is high time for change. With this vote, the Parliament adopted a report from its Committee on Budgetary Control criticising EFSA very harshly for conflicts of interest and revolving door cases. Being aware of this decision, the Council should give a very clear signal and not accept Ms Frewen for the EFSA management board.

Yours sincerely



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Cosigned by:  
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