

Greens issue stinging rebuke to Princess Anne after GM intervention



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Keith Taylor MEP: 'This is a right royal stitch up; Princess Anne holds no elected public office and is supposed to remain politically neutral. Yet she is using her considerable unearned status to push a nakedly political agenda.'

Molly Scott Cato MEP: 'The opinions expressed by Princess Anne are not helpful in terms of the public debate, which is often dominated by misunderstanding and agribusiness hype.'

Green MEPs are condemning Princess Anne's 'historically ill-informed' suggestions that Britain should embrace GM crops post-Brexit.

Princess Anne, who is supposed to remain politically neutral, was speaking to the Farming Today programme on Radio 4 when she echoed the suggestion of some Conservative Ministers that Britain should [water down EU GM crop safeguards](#) following the UK's exit from the European Union.

The royal intervention comes just days after MEPs in the European Parliament's Environment Committee voted against the import of a range of genetically modified maize varieties for use in feed and food.

The majority of MEPs [voted against proposals](#) to authorise several genetically modified maize varieties from Syngenta.

Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East and a member of the European Parliament's Environment Committee, said:

"This is a right royal stitch up; Princess Anne holds no elected public office and is supposed to remain politically neutral. Yet she is using her considerable unearned status to push a nakedly political agenda and doing so with a flimsy grasp of agricultural history and science. It's fair to say that she doesn't speak for the average UK farmer, let alone the average

British citizen.”

“In stark contrast, just this week, I joined elected MEPs from across Europe to vote against the import and use of untested GM maize in the EU. It is the sixth time in just over a year that the European Parliament has signalled it’s opposition to the approval of new GM foods. EU GM safeguards are vitally important.”

Dr Molly Scott Cato, Green MEP for the South West and a member of the European Parliament’s Agriculture Committee, said:

“The opinions expressed by Princess Anne are not helpful in terms of the public debate, which is often dominated by misunderstanding and agribusiness hype. Genetic modification has failed to live up to its promised benefits particularly in terms of yield.”

“Perhaps the Princess should have a word with her brother, who has a deep understanding of ecological and systemic risks from GM crops, which are intended for intensively farmed monocultures which threaten biodiversity and soil fertility.”

“There is also the issue of corporate power. The planned merger between German pharmaceutical giant Bayer and American seed-maker Monsanto would strengthen the arm of the GM seed lobby. If this takeover is ever allowed to take place it would create one giant corporation controlling 30% of the world market for seeds and 24% of the pesticide market.”

“Agri-business argues we need GM to feed the world, but the world already produces enough food for 10bn people. Our focus should not be on increasing production, but rather on reducing food waste and radically reorganising our wasteful and inefficient food distribution system.”

Mr Taylor concluded:

“Worryingly, Princess Anne appears to be [supporting Tory Ministers](#) who have suggested Brexit could be ‘an opportunity’ to water down GM crop regulations in Britain. As Greens, we will be fighting to make sure this doesn’t happen; it is vital we maintain and strengthen EU GM safeguards post-Brexit. For the health of British people, the environment and farmers, the UK must not be flooded with untested genetically modified crops.”

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