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Farm bill amendment favorable to biotech companies meets with protest

JUL 19, 2012



One of the many amendments attached to the 2012 Farm Bill, currently awaiting debate on the floor of the House of Representatives, is the subject of controversy. [According to Reuters](#), the amendment would lessen government oversight of genetically modified crops:

From online petitions to face-to-face lobbying on Capitol Hill, an array of consumer and environmental organizations and individuals are ringing alarm bells over moves they say will eradicate badly needed safety checks on crops genetically modified to withstand herbicides, pests and pesticides.

The measures could speed the path to market for big biotech companies like Monsanto and Dow Chemical that make billions of dollars from genetically altered corn, soybeans, cotton and other crops.

The biotech industry stance is that the current level of government oversight is prohibitive and stops farmers from gaining access to needed technology. As spokeswoman Karen Batra for the Biotechnology Industry Organization said, "You've got farmers who have seeds in the barn and need to get seeds in the ground."

If the amendment is approved, the ability to block consumer access to new genetically modified seeds via the court system would be lessened. In the past few years, several products were approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture but approval was rescinded pending litigation.

This provision, however, would "allow biotech crops to be planted even if courts rule they were approved illegally."

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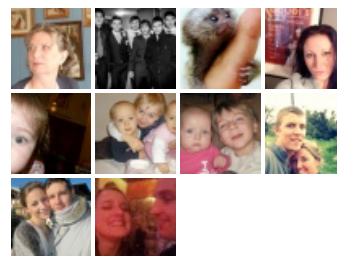
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