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REUTERS **Polish Senate Approves National Ban on GMO Seeds**

Date: *21-Apr-06*
Country: POLAND
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The bill was pushed through thanks to the combined forces of the minority-ruling conservatives and their fringe allies, who want to protect Poland's image as an enviromentally-friendly state and fear biotech crops could contaminate other crops.

The legislation still has to get a final green light from lower house deputies following the Senate vote. It also has to be signed by the president to become law.

Poland's plans for what is effectively a national GMO ban have already drawn criticism from the European Commission, the EU executive, for threatening to break EU laws, especially those that aim to preserve the bloc's single internal market.

The Commission takes the view that if a region wants to ban GMO crops, such restrictions have to be scientifically justified and crop-specific -- not overtly political motivated or blanket bans on all biotech seeds or crops.

The Commission's position was put to the test a few years ago by an Austrian region whose proposed regional GMO ban was slapped down by Brussels. The Court of First Instance, the EU's second highest court, upheld the Commission's view last October.

Early last year, Italy adopted a law imposing a ban on GMO crops until all its regions have agreed laws on how farmers should separate biotech crops from organic and traditional varieties. The Commission has already threatened legal action.

No biotech seeds have been planted in Poland and the ruling conservatives, who have long backed a GMO-free Poland, have said they could even seek changes to the bloc's biotech policy.

REUTERS