



# Transgenic plants: no new sites in the environment in 2014

**17.02.2015- Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are banned in Switzerland for agricultural, horticultural or forestry use in the environment. Since 2011, the FOEN has monitored the environment to locate the unintentional presence of GMOs. In 2014, individual genetically modified (GM) rapeseed plants were found at previously known locations.**

The uncontrolled spread of GMOs in the environment must be curbed as much as possible to prevent the contamination of conventional agricultural crops and potential impairments of biodiversity. As provided for in the Release Ordinance (RO), the FOEN has developed a monitoring system together with the cantons to ensure early detection of any unintentional presence of GMOs in the environment.

In 2014, the Cantonal Laboratory of Basel-Stadt (KLBS) carried out a monitoring program on behalf of the FOEN that concentrated on sites at higher risk (hot spots) of accidental releases of seeds (silos, oil mills, marshalling yards), as well as sites along railways (transects). 1,066 plants were monitored at 30 sites. No GM rapeseed plants were found. In addition, a total of 1,091 rapeseed samples were taken at another 60 hot spots, and no genetic modification could be detected.

## **Individual transgenic rapeseed plants found at known locations**

The KLBS tested 1,464 plants for the presence of transgenes at Kleinhüningen port and St. Johann train station from the spring to the fall of 2014. Transgenes were detected in 43 of the 1,414 tested rapeseed plants at Kleinhüningen port in April and May, whereas they were found in only one of 50 rapeseed plants at St. Johann train station in April. In October, no GM rapeseeds were detected at either site.

Ongoing control measures carried out by the cantons at all contaminated sites also ensure that new and lasting populations cannot grow from GM seeds still present in the soil. The percentage of GM rapeseed plants at the two investigated sites decreased significantly from 2013 to 2014. The percentage of GM rapeseed plants at Kleinhüningen port fell from 5.1% to 3.0%, while the percentage at St. Johann train station decreased from 22.9% to 2.0% (see the press release of the Cantonal Laboratory of Basel-Stadt, 2014, on the right).