



# 1 Transgenic plants: previously known locations and one new site in the environment in 2015

**03.02.2016 – 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 all occurrences of GMOs. In 2015, individual genetically modified (GM) rapeseed plants were found at already known locations, but also at one new site.**

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 with the cantons to locate all occurrences of GMOs in the environment.

In 2015, the Cantonal Laboratory of Basel-Stadt (KLBS), in cooperation with several cantons, 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, trans-shipment centres), as well as locations along railways.

## **Individual transgenic rapeseed plants found at known sites and GM rapeseed plants discovered at a new location**

3,918 plants at 57 sites were monitored and investigated for transgenic plants. A total of 15 GM rapeseed plants were found, of which 8 GM rapeseed plants were located at previously known sites (Kleinhünigen port and St. Johann train station, BS). During the annual sampling of rail sections (30 x 1 km sections), an additional, previously unknown site with GM rapeseed plants was discovered in the Canton of Ticino.

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 known and investigated sites of Kleinhünigen port and St. Johann train station decreased significantly from 2013 to 2015. At Kleinhünigen port, the percentage of GM rapeseed plants fell from 5.1% to 0.6% (2014: 2.8%), while at St. Johann train station, the percentage decreased from 22.9% to 14.3% (2014: 2%). In fact, at the latter site, only 1 GM rapeseed plant was found out of a total of 7 sampled rapeseed plants in 2015.

## **Bird feed a potential route of entry for GMOs**

The FOEN is constantly searching for potential new routes of entry for genetically modified organisms. In a study commissioned by the FOEN, genetically modified seeds were found in various commercially available bird feed products. The exact product flow and the probability of these seeds being established in the environment are the subject of further investigations.