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Last week was group week in the EP, where MEPs got together to discuss how they will vote on this weeks plenary reports.

LIFE

Katy saw the presentation of a successful project on treating waste for use as fertilisers on agricultural land. The project was carried out by Bangor University and was supported by LIFE funding from the European Commission. "I now understand the exasperation farmers go through in applying waste to land" said project officer Julie Williamson, the project has been followed up with a manual on the reuse of waste in rural habitats. For more information see www.bangor.ac.uk/ies/TWIRLS/TWIRLS_home.htm.

Genetically Modified Organisms

The Socialist Group held a conference on agriculture where representatives from the UK government (UKREP) made a presentation. After a question by Chris Davies (North West, Lib Dem) it was stated that the UK is in the early stages of research on accelerated breeding and genomics. Caroline Lucas (South East, Greens) expressed her disappointment with the UK government's measures to keep in line with public opinion in its GMO consultation, to which UKREP replied that the UK government is striving to represent the interests of both the consumer and the farmer in issues such as co-existence. In light of this, Linda McAvan (Yorkshire and the Humber, Lab) and UKREP were in agreement that the question of organic standards in relation to GMOs should be treated delicately if organic farmers are to have a stable future.

THIS WEEK is Plenary Week where MEPs debate and vote on reports. Important items on the agenda for the session are:

- **Voluntary Modulation**

After being postponed at last month's plenary session, the report on voluntary modulation is due to be voted on this week. Goepel's (DE, EPP) report rejects the Commission's proposal to introduce voluntary modulation for 20% of direct farm payments. It is likely to be adopted by MEPs.

As regards to the money given to rural development schemes, Defra says that it is waiting for a Commission agreement before it decides how much to spend. This makes the plenary vote important because without it the report cannot move on to the next stages- a vote in Council and then finally an agreement in the Commission.

- **Rural development funding**

Mulder's (NL, ALDE) report was also postponed at the last plenary session, and will be voted on this week. The report states that rural development funding is currently imbalanced

and should be provided on a needs basis. The UK NFUs welcome the report and we are optimistic that MEPs will vote in favour of it.