

GM wheat case goes back to square one

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"GM wheat case goes back to square one

The Swiss environment minister, Moritz Leuenberger, has said that a decision by his office rejecting scientists' requests to plant genetically-modified wheat must be reconsidered. His decision comes just weeks before the debate on GM crops is due to resume in parliament.

A decision is yet to be made whether GM wheat can be planted outdoors in Switzerland.

Swiss fields have remained GM free since the early 1990s when modified potatoes were planted. Two other requests to grow GM crops outdoors were thrown out in 1999.

A similar line was taken last November, when the Federal Office for the Environment - part of Leuenberger's ministry - rejected a request by the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich to plant eight square metres of GM wheat.

"It's a good sign because there is a law and we now know it will be applied, which is good for future research," said Christof Sautter, Federal Institute of Technology researcher.

source swissinfo.org

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President's Report

Dear Readers

Well, it's two months since our last issue ... does it seem like it? NO!!! Time just goes far too fast!!! And the weather has finally changed for the better ... hopefully!!! ... and don't people know it ... everyone seems happier, attitudes are far better, people are ready to enjoy a laugh, everyone is more enthusiastic, people have more time to chat, to go to town. to enjoy the outdoor life ... the sun is such a good tonic!!! And don't the animals know it ... they're stretching out in the sun and happy to be outside. Let's hope the weather continues in this vein a while.

It was great to get so much feedback on our last Helvetia issue, and we thank you all for your kind words of support. I received a letter from one of our readers, stating her feelings when leaving Switzerland for New Zealand were much the same as my big change in career ... and I guess to a certain degree that is very true!!! However I think it took a lot of courage to leave your native country, the culture that you were brought up in, your family and friends and the lifestyle you knew so well, for a country many of you knew very little about. With a determination to succeed, good work habits, and great enthusiasm, the Swiss in New Zealand have achieved wonderful results in their chosen fields, and this is a credit to you all. It is wonderful how most of you have adapted so well, and now find New Zealand home.

Recently, at our first of August celebrations, we listened to the familiar church bells and then the wonderful speech of the President of the Confederation, and were overjoyed at the great improvement from last year's music and speech. Congratulations, and let's hope that we can enjoy future tapes from Switzerland on the occasion of the National Day celebrations.

I sincerely hope that you all enjoy this issue of the Helvetia, and remember we appreciate any feedback that you, our readers, give.

Regards
Marianne

Miss Switzerland considers Nigeria boycott

The newly crowned Miss Switzerland says she may boycott the Miss World pageant in Nigeria.

Nadine Vinzens said she would not take part unless the Nigerian courts lifted a death sentence imposed on a woman for having a child out of wedlock.

"I will wait to see what is decided on October 15 (when the appeal is heard): if the condemned mother is pardoned, I will take part," the 19-year-old beauty queen told the 20 Minuten newspaper. "If she isn't, that would be unacceptable and I would stay away."

Vinzens, from canton Graubünden, was elected Miss Switzerland in a final in Neuchâtel on September 14.

Participants from France and Belgium have already announced their withdrawal from the November 30 event in the Nigerian capital, Abuja.

Last month, an Islamic court in northern Nigeria rejected single mother Amina Lawal's appeal against a stoning sentence for having sex outside of marriage.

The 30-year-old had given birth to a daughter more than nine months after divorcing her husband.

The sentence is scheduled to be carried out in 2004 after she finishes weaning the baby.

Several governments and human rights groups around the world have urged President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration to intercede.

The stoning would be the first in Nigeria since a dozen states adopted Islamic law, or Shariah, in 1999.

European Parliament members have urged competitors to boycott the Miss World event."

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