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Letter | 20.07.2022

Public consultation on new genetic modification techniques

Greens/EFA response to the Commission

To the attention of:

Dear Mr Timmermans, Vice President for the European Green Deal
Dear Ms Kyriakides, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety
Dear Mr Sinkevičius, Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries
Dear Mr Wojciechowski, Commissioner for Agriculture

Brussels, 20th of July 2022

Dear Vice President, dear Commissioners,

We are writing to express our views on the European Commission's plan to introduce a separate legislation for genetically modified (GM) plants produced by certain "new genomic techniques", as set out in the ongoing public consultation [1] and targeted survey for the impact assessment [2].

We took note that the Commission's policy scenarios have not been made public but only released to a select group of individuals via a targeted survey. We consider that this is not the appropriate way to ensure participants to the consultation have access to all relevant information to make an informed answer and call on you to publish this survey without delay.

As Greens/EFA group, we oppose the introduction of separate legislation for products of new genetic modification (GM) techniques such as targeted mutagenesis (i.e. SDN-1, SDN-2 and ODM) and cisgenesis.[3] We believe that all genetically modified (GM) crops must be subject to the existing GMO legislation with its requirements for risk assessment, traceability and clear labelling.

Indeed, the European Court of Justice clarified in 2018 that new GM techniques cannot be excluded from the scope of EU GMO legislation unless they have conventionally been used in a number

of applications and have a long safety record. Since this is not the case for gene editing techniques, such as CRISPR, these techniques should be regulated under the EU GMO legislation, in order not to undermine the EU's Precautionary Principle.[4] As Greens/EFA, we fully support the Court's ruling.

Like for any GM organism, these basic principles should apply at all times:

1. **The need for a full and robust risk assessment:** The unintended DNA mutations in gene-edited plants can lead to alterations in the function of many genes, which in turn can lead to altered biochemistry of the plant, including the production of new toxins or allergens. Therefore, all gene-edited plants need to undergo a full risk assessment taking into account both intended and unintended genetic alterations and their consequences. The EU cannot rely on developers' claims that their products are without danger to the environment and human health.
2. **No market access without traceability and detection method**: The EU must require both traceability and detection methods from GM developers who wish to market their products on the single market. The fact that analytical methods are not available today to differentiate certain products from similar plants produced with non-GM methods cannot be an excuse to weaken regulatory requirements.
3. **Consumers' right to know and clear labelling**: Consumers have the right to know how their food is produced and the EU cannot leave them in the dark on whether GM methods were used. The EU should maintain the well-established distinction between GM and non-GM food, and provide consumers with an easy-to-access label on the final product to inform their choice.

The sustainability of our food system is not a matter of individual products. A plant trait in isolation, without considering the agricultural context in which the plant is grown, is insufficient to draw any meaningful conclusion. Until today, conventional breeding has consistently outstripped genetic engineering techniques (old and new) in producing crops tolerant to stresses such as drought, floods, pests, and diseases. Claims that GM plants will contribute to improved EU food systems are not supported by current evidence. The European Union should not weaken its GMO regulations to accommodate empty promises of "sustainable" GM plants.

The introduction of separate legislation for certain GM crops would jeopardize rather than support the much-needed transition towards a social and agro-ecological model of farming. As Greens/EFA, we support a system which delivers sufficient amounts of healthy, nutritious, quality food to all, respects social and labour rights of agricultural workers and migrants, ensures a fair income for farmers and supports micro, small and medium sized farms, while maintaining long term fertility, productivity and efficient resource use. Allowing more patented GM seeds and products on the market would counter efforts to expand locally adapted and organic agricultural production.

We are already facing major obstacles to the changes envisaged by the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy. Any steps to relax existing environmental and food safety standards must be rejected.

Yours sincerely,

Philippe Lamberts, Co-President of the Greens/EFA Group

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Mounir Satouri, Greens/EFA MEP

Marie Toussaint, Greens/EFA MEP

Thomas Waitz, Greens/EFA MEP

Sarah Wiener, Greens/EFA MEP

- ANNEX TO THE LETTER
- **COMMISSION'S RESPONSE - 19 SEPTEMBER 2022**

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13119-Legislation-for-plants-produced-by-certain-new-genomic-techniques_en

[2] This targeted survey is being conducted by Technopolis Group, on behalf of the Commission and as part of their impact assessment.

[3] Greens/EFA, 2020, Genome editing in agriculture. A Greens/EFA perspective

[4] Court of Justice of the European Union, 2018, Judgment in Case C-528/16

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12.10.2026

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01.06.2026

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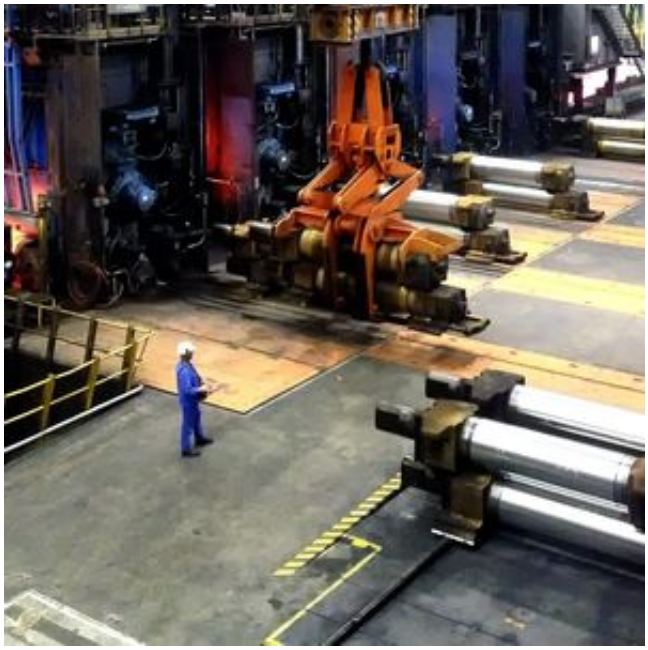


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Responsible MEPs



Benoît Biteau

Member



Eleonora Evi

Member



Martin Häusling

Member



Tilly Metz

Member



Michèle Rivasi

Member



Thomas Waitz

Member



Sarah Wiener

Member

Contact person



Franziska Achterberg

Biodiversity campaigner

Attached documents

Greens-EFA response to the Commission public consultation on new genetic modification techniques - 20 July 2022
Commission's response to our letter - 19 September 2022

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