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The possible deregulation of certain GMOS in the EU: what would the implications be?

A pathways analysis

This report - authored by Adrian Ely, Patrick Van Zwanenberg, Elise Wach and Dominic Glover - was commissioned and funded by the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament.

The European Commission wants to deregulate certain genetically modified (GM) plants developed with new genetic engineering techniques, in order to facilitate their commercialisation in the EU.

However, the large-scale commercialisation of GM plants is expected to lead to higher seed prices, less seed breeding innovation and a reduced availability, diversity and choice of seeds.

This is the lesson learnt from countries like the U.S. that have embraced GM crops, and where farmers have planted them at scale. These countries' agricultural sectors got locked into a pathway of input-dependent, industrialised farming practices with devastating impacts on biodiversity, climate and the farming community.

Our study warns that, in the context of existing intellectual property regimes, the deregulation of certain GM crops and foods could have wide and long-term implications for the broader sustainable and equitable development of the EU’s agri-food systems.

These potential implications should be weighed carefully in a broad and democratic debate, which should prioritise the desired sustainable directions for European agriculture and food systems, rather than placing a naïve faith in the supposed power of a singular technological pathway that locks farmers, input suppliers, food companies and consumers into an input-dependent technology treadmill.

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