



Commissioner for Health and Food Safety
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Opinion on the Commission's proposal for a regulation on plants obtained by certain new genomic techniques and their food and feed
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Dear Stella Kyriakides

The new plant breeding techniques (NGTs) have the potential to enhance productivity and reduce the use of pesticides in agriculture, as well as to make crops more resilient to climate change. The new breeding technology could prove crucial for the EU's opportunities to realize the green transition in agriculture. Among other things, according to the European Green Deal, we must reduce the use of pesticides by 50 % and restore nature to cover at least 20% of the EU's land areas by 2030. We therefore need measures that support innovative companies in the EU, which can deliver the necessary sustainable solutions to the agricultural and food industries.

The Danish Parliament would therefore like to express its support for the Commission's new proposal for a regulation on plants obtained by new genomic techniques and their food, and feed. The proposal contains a number of significant improvements compared to the current GMO legislation in the EU. This particularly applies to the proposal that certain NGT plants should be able to be reported on an equal footing with traditionally bred plants, when the new added traits could also have arisen naturally or through traditional breeding. The Commission's proposal is both necessary and a step in the right direction, which must not be missed.

However, in Parliament's opinion, there is room for and a need to further promote this development. In particular, Parliament urges the Commission to take a similar step in relation to the use of this technique on microorganisms, so that European companies can also exploit the great potential in this area. Parliament is aware that an assessment from EFSA in this area is awaited, which is why it is relevant to revise the regulation on NGT microorganisms immediately after this is presented, but it is crucial that the Commission's proposal on plants is adopted without delay.

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The NGT method has the potential to significantly increase efficiency in agriculture. It can create high-yielding plant varieties, requiring less agricultural land. This can strengthen European food security, as the possibilities for producing food locally increase if current complications such as climate change, more unstable weather, and war in Ukraine are addressed. Moreover, it is promising for the green transition. Parliament therefore urges the Commission to ensure that changed framework conditions for NGTs also contribute to an increased focus on plant-based solutions. It should therefore be ensured that incentives are generally created to allocate less productive land to nature, climate, and environmental measures on parts of the surplus land.

Parliament supports keeping organic production out of the proposal on the regulation of NGT plants, as this area is best regulated in the Organic Products Regulation.

Parliament emphasizes that there is a risk that the lack of focus on patenting new genetic technologies (NGTs) in the legislative proposal may lead to challenges related to monopoly formation within crop breeding. If it becomes possible to patent crops that are bred using NGTs, it could potentially hamper research and innovation in the development of climate-adapted and robust crops, as fewer smaller companies and researchers will be able to breed further on the new variants of plant varieties. This can ultimately reduce the degree of local adaptation in the member states. The patent issue is, however, not only relevant in relation to NGT crops but also conventionally bred crops. It is therefore positive that the Commission proposes that NGT varieties should be regulated according to the same rules as traditionally bred varieties within the existing UPOV system. Here, the breeder's exemption can contribute to supporting the development of new variants of plant varieties. Parliament therefore looks forward to the study announced by the Commission on the issue of patenting and the possible consequences thereof.

Parliament would also urge the Commission to take a closer look at the time-consuming processes regarding EU approvals of new foods (novel foods). Plant-based solutions are crucial for a sustainable European food sector. Therefore, biosolution companies should have the best possible conditions.

There will still be a need for the existing approval procedures in the EU's current GMO legislation when we talk about more complex NGT and GMO plants, which clearly differ from naturally occurring organisms or classical mutations.

The use of genetic technology in the EU must take place in both a safe and ethically defensible manner, but our European legislation must not create obstacles to innovative solutions for the agricultural and food industries, which can contribute to achieving the goals of the European Green Deal, the farm to fork strategy, and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, while making our companies competitive on the global market.



Parliament therefore looks forward to the presentation by the Commission of the “EU Biotech and Biomanufacturing Initiative”, which was launched by the Commission’s President in her State of The Union Speech on 13 September 2023. It is necessary to ensure that we in Europe have the necessary instruments and framework conditions to promote the green transition.

Best regards

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Chairman of the Committee on Environment of the Danish Parliament

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