

Europe's agri-food chain calls for NGT adoption now and opposes additional burden on operators

As trilogue talks focus on additional requirements for conventional-like NGT products, 25 EU agri-food organisations call on European Parliament not to put more restrictions on business and support a final agreement with Council and Commission on New Genomic Techniques (NGTs)

After eight months of discussions in trilogue, negotiations on New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) are still not concluded while European plant breeding, agriculture and food production are facing urgent and growing challenges. Climate change, new pests and diseases, and a decreasing range of available crop protection options threaten production and competitiveness. At the same time, demand for high-quality food and biomass continues to rise and almost 30 countries around the world embrace NGTs as conventional-like breeding methods. **NGTs can help to deliver innovation faster, with more competitive, resilient and resource-efficient crops. But the EU must now finally act to provide the clear and enabling legislative framework that frees their potential and puts Europe on a level playing field with its main competitors.**

The undersigned European associations represent the overwhelming majority of EU agri-food operators, from input industries to farmers and from processors to final producers. Together, we express our deep concern that the much needed progress NGTs may bring seems to be blocked by political demands that go beyond the scope of the original Commission proposal which aimed to provide a regulatory procedure that verifies the **equivalence of conventional-like plants developed with NGTs** with those resulting from classical breeding methods or which may result from natural mutations. Subjecting such products to additional sustainability requirements, traceability and labelling rules, or extensive monitoring plans all **erodes the scientific base of the proposal**, limits the potential and efficacy of the use of the technologies and resulting products, and **places the EU-approach in opposition to those of all other countries** with respective legislation already in place. It also risks unnecessary conflicts with crucial trading partners worldwide.

As repeatedly underlined, **simplification and competitiveness** must now be at the heart of EU policy making. Yet, the additional conditions for conventional-like NGT1 products still requested by the EP delegation add only new layers of bureaucracy for Member States and operators, increase costs, and **create unnecessary administrative complexity and burden**, undermining the efficiency and clarity that the legislation is meant to bring.

We are fully supportive of the objective to increase the economic, environmental and social sustainability of Europe's agri-food sector. This includes our support for policies and regulations that incentivise and protect investment, including appropriate intellectual property provisions assuring maximum access and utilisation of innovations, legal certainty for farmers privilege and agri-food operators, and to the benefit of Europe's economy and society at large. At the same time, it is important to reiterate that the new regulation for NGTs has the specific scope and purpose of authorising plants that are similar to conventional ones also under similar conditions. **It should not be overstretched with additional elements** that are already part of other, dedicated EU legislation.

The question therefore is both simple and fundamental: does the EU finally set rules that give its breeders access to the full toolbox of advanced breeding methods and its farmers as well as the agri-food chain the new plant varieties needed to secure high-quality production under more challenging climatic conditions, or not?

Adopting the NGT legislation without further delay is essential to promote Europe's strategic autonomy. Breeders and farmers in other parts of the world are already using conventional-like NGT products. In fact, many third countries are already updating their respective legislation to further strengthen the use the technologies and their positive impact on productivity and competitiveness. Europe must not be left behind. Further delay only widens the competitiveness gap between the EU and its global partners.

We therefore once again call on co-legislators **to drop unnecessary additional requirements for NGT product authorisations, conclude negotiations now, and adopt a science-based, future-oriented legislation that is in line with and supports the fundamental policy objectives of competitiveness, simplification and trade facilitation.**

We remain fully committed to further contribute to the discussion to explain our position.

Yours faithfully,

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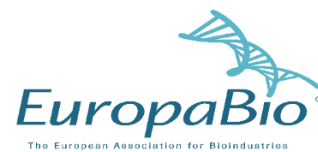
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