

EU Ecolabel must not demonise technologies

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The European biotechnology industry strongly rejects the EU Commission's suggestion to potentially exclude genetic engineering, from the scope of the planned [EU Ecolabel for Financial Products](#). Credible ecolabels should rely on concretely measurable impacts of products or economic activities, and not discriminate against entire technologies.

Cutting edge and innovative technologies have an important role to play in meeting key global challenges, such as enabling smarter, more efficient use of resources, ensuring good health and well-being, achieving food security, improved nutrition, promoting sustainable agriculture, and further developing the bioeconomy. Excluding genetic engineering from the EU Ecolabel for Financial Products will massively discourage investments and innovation, thereby directly harming sustainability. The Commission rightly emphasises that "life sciences and biotechnology are main innovation drivers in the European Union"¹, qualifies biotechnology as a [Key Enabling Technology](#), and provides significant funding for biotechnology research through its research and innovation program. Excluding some of the main innovation drivers and Key Enabling Technologies from the toolbox would not advance but would instead undermine sustainability, thereby deviating from the guiding principles of the Ecolabel.

An EU Ecolabel for financial products should encourage investment in sustainable economic activities. Excluding genetic engineering would also put a halt to the development and improvement of industrial biotechnologies and risk disqualifying a range of products or economic activities which may have more positive impacts than products or economic activities using other or older technologies. This would mean that the Ecolabel could be awarded to less instead of more sustainable products, thereby clearly undermining the credibility of the label. Such an exclusion could also risk contributing to further disinformation about new technologies, thereby contradicting the Commission's pledge to fight disinformation.

Background

Under Section 5 on *Sustainable Investment and Economic Activities*, question 5.1 in the Commission's questionnaire "EU Ecolabel for Financial Products: 1st Stakeholder Questionnaire on the product scope and criteria definition" asks, "Should the EU

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/research/industrial_technologies/biotechnologies_en.html



Ecolabel have exclusions for specific activities on the basis of their environmental impact?", and "If yes, which ones below would be relevant?". The list provided includes "genetic engineering", along with six additional activities / technologies. The Commission's deadline for completing the questionnaire is 25 January 2019.

About EuropaBio

EuropaBio, the European Association for Bioindustries, promotes an innovative and dynamic European biotechnology industry. EuropaBio and its members are committed to the socially responsible use of biotechnology to improve quality of life, to prevent, diagnose, treat and cure diseases, to improve the quality and quantity of food and feedstuffs and to move towards a biobased and zero-waste economy. EuropaBio represents 78 corporate and associate members and bio regions, and 15 national biotechnology associations in turn representing over 1800 biotech SMEs. Read more about our work at www.europabio.org.