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European Commission proposal on New Genomic Techniques – a first step towards modernizing the EU GMO framework

The European Commission's proposal for plants produced by certain new genomic techniques (NGT legislation) is a sign of its commitment to timely and relevant policymaking to ensure food security and tackle environmental challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss.

The GMO framework has implications for the EU's global competitiveness and desire for greater resiliency against climate and geopolitical dynamics. As the EU modernizes its GMO Framework, it must urgently assess and take into account scientific and technological developments in all GMO-related legislation which will inevitably be impacted.

In this context, there are urgent scientific and economic reasons to further adapt the GMO framework for genetically modified microorganisms (GMMs). Globally, other jurisdictions are developing enabling frameworks that provide the needed regulatory certainty for industry and allow innovative products to access the market. By addressing GMMs in the GMO framework, the EU can lay out a pragmatic approach for novel products that will grow the EU's resilience and competitiveness.

Europe cannot afford a delay in legislation for GMMs

Our policy asks:

- Include in the NGT legislation a commitment for the EC to publish a proposal for additional policy actions on genetically modified microorganisms (GMMs) by 2024.
- Accelerate the overall revision of the GMO framework across sectors beyond plants - to be in line with existing scientific advances.

This would help increase the Union strategic autonomy by developing novel products which contribute to the resilience of agri-food systems while reducing their environmental footprint.

Biotechnology – a key enabler for the circular economy and the green transition

Biotechnology drives EU growth, with an average annual growth rate of 4.1%. This is more than twice as fast as the EU overall economy. Biotechnology generates highly effective value chains across Europe, outperforms highly productive industries, and contributes to growth through R&D.¹ The scientific and technological progress of the industry should be recognised and supported by enabling and pragmatic regulatory frameworks.

¹ https://www.europabio.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/EuropaBio_Economic_Footprint_Biotechnology_Summary.pdf

Industrial biotechnology uses microorganisms and their fermentation products (e.g., enzymes, vitamins) in sectors such as food and feed production, agriculture, consumer products, health, and the chemical industry. Some innovations in industrial biotechnology rely on the genetic improvement of production microorganisms. This is accomplished using constantly evolving techniques, tools and methods, including NGTs.

The biotechnological optimisation of microorganisms results in both efficiency and sustainability benefits, such as higher yields of the intended molecules (e.g., amino acids, vitamins, or enzymes), elimination of genes that are of potential safety concern, improvements in the utilisation of nutrients, energy and water, and a lower environmental footprint.

EuropaBio stands ready to contribute to the ongoing dialogue with EU policymakers and relevant stakeholders to ensure that EU policy continues to follow scientific and technological progress to meet global challenges.

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 corporate and associate members, plus national biotechnology associations and bioregions. Read more about our work at www.europabio.org.

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