



## Biotechnologies: Commission seeks open debate on New Genomic Techniques as study shows potential for sustainable agriculture and need for new policy

Brussels, 29 April 2021

Today, the European Commission published, at the request of the Council, a [study on New Genomic Techniques \(NGTs\)](#). The study shows that NGTs, which are techniques to alter the genome of an organism, have the potential to contribute to a more sustainable food system as part of the objectives of the [European Green Deal](#) and the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#).

At the same time, the study finds that the current GMO legislation, adopted in 2001, is not fit for purpose for these innovative technologies. The Commission will now start a wide and open consultation process to discuss the design of a new legal framework for these biotechnologies.

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella **Kyriakides**, said: *"The study we publish today concludes that New Genomic Techniques can promote the sustainability of agricultural production, in line with the objectives of our Farm to Fork Strategy. With the safety of consumers and the environment as the guiding principle, now is the moment to have an open dialogue with citizens, Member States and the European Parliament to jointly decide the way forward for the use of these biotechnologies in the EU."*

### NGTs developing rapidly in many parts of the world

NGTs, which can be defined as all techniques to alter the genome of an organism developed after 2001 (when the EU's legislation on GMOs was adopted), have rapidly developed over the last two decades in many parts of the world, with some applications already on the market of some EU trade partners.

The main findings of the study are:

- NGT products have the potential to **contribute to sustainable food systems** with plants more resistant to diseases, environmental conditions and climate change effects. Moreover, the products can benefit from higher nutritional qualities such as healthier fatty acid content, and reduced need of agricultural inputs such as pesticides;
- By contributing to the EU's objectives of innovation and sustainability of food systems, as well as a more competitive economy, NGTs can have **benefits for many sectors of our societies**;
- At the same time, the study also analysed **concerns associated with NGT products** and their current and future applications. Concerns included the possible safety and environmental impact, for example, on biodiversity, the coexistence with organic and GM-free agriculture, as well as labelling;
- NGTs are a very diverse set of techniques and can achieve different results, with some plant products produced by NGTs being as safe as conventionally bred plants for human and animal health and for the environment;
- The study finds that there are strong indications that the **current 2001 GMO legislation is not fit for purpose for some NGTs** and their products, and that it needs adaptation to scientific and technological progress.

### Next Steps

The study will be discussed with EU ministers at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council in May. The Commission will also discuss its findings with the European Parliament and all interested stakeholders.

In the coming months, an impact assessment, including a public consultation, will be carried out to explore policy options concerning the regulation of plants derived from certain NGTs.

### Background

The study was prepared following a request from the Council of the European Union which, on 8 November 2019, asked the Commission to carry out "a study in light of the Court of Justice's judgment in Case C-528/16 regarding the status of novel genomic techniques under Union law."

The study was conducted by the Commission and informed by expert opinions and contributions from Member States' competent authorities and EU-level stakeholders via targeted consultations.

A wide range of participants was involved in the [consultation](#), which preceded the preparation of the report. All contributions are published.

### **More information**

The complete study, the Commission's letter to the Council transmitting the study and outlining the policy follow-up, as well as a Questions & Answers are available [here](#).

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Press contacts:

[Stefan DE KEERSMAECKER](#) (+32 2 298 46 80)

[Stephan MEDER](#) (+32 2 291 39 17)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)