

**JOINT POSITION PAPER ON THE PROPOSAL FOR THE REGULATION FOR PLANTS
RESULTING FROM NEW GENOMIC TECHNIQUES (NGTs) WITH FOCUS ON
TRACEABILITY AND LABELLING OF CONVENTIONAL-LIKE CATEGORY 1 PLANTS AND
PRODUCTS RESULTING FROM NGTs**

Brussels, 28 April 2025

We, the undersigned agri-food value chain partners ask EU policy makers to:

Support the Commission and Council proposal that allow **freedom of choice for breeders, farmers, supply chain operators and consumers** in relation to the use of plants and food, feed and non-food products obtained by NGTs.

Reject any further mandatory traceability and labelling requirements for conventional-like NGT products. This will ensure the **consistency** of the legislative proposal by clearly differentiating conventional-like NGT plants and products (Category 1) from GMOs. Acting otherwise would **create unjustified costs, discriminatory, disproportionate, enforcement challenges and trade-disruptive traceability and labelling systems.**

Work towards increasing the public understanding of NGTs and their potential benefits and risks to foster an informed and engaged consumer base that supports responsible innovation.

In its “Vision for Agriculture and Food¹” for a competitive, resilient, future-oriented, and fair EU food production system, the Commission clearly acknowledges that NGTs are key to contribute to the EU’s food security and that an enabling regulatory framework is needed to ensure a level-playing field with third countries. The undersigned agri-food value chain partners support this ambition and welcome the Commission’s commitment to working in close cooperation with the Council and the European Parliament to find a forward-looking compromise on the proposal for a Regulation on plants produced by

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_530

certain NGTs. **A science-based and proportionate legal framework for NGT plants and derived products is essential to strengthen the competitiveness and resilience** of the European agricultural and of the food and feed supply systems, considering the sustainability and climate change challenges.

In view of the upcoming triilogue negotiations, we reiterate **our strong concerns** for the discussions about the possible introduction of **unjustified, mandatory labelling requirements for conventional-like NGT plants and products and their negative impact on the development and uptake of NGT plants and products, on trade as well as on the EU's competitiveness.**

The core spirit of the Commission's NGT-proposal aims at differentiating NGT plants and products that are equivalent to conventional plant varieties (Category 1) from transgenic products subject to the regulatory framework for GMOs. The Commission proposal ensures transparency and freedom of choice for farmers which allows the establishment of supply chains that wish to produce according to certain standards to respond to market demands.

The balanced approach of the European Commission should not be undermined by requiring traceability and mandatory “New Genomic Techniques” labelling for the Category 1 NGT plants and products at all stages of the supply chain, including for the end-consumer. Such requirements are discriminatory and very challenging to implement due to several factors:

Technical constraints, enforcement challenges associated with the traceability and labelling of new genomic techniques (NGTs)

- NGT Plants classified as Category 1 could, by definition, originate from conventional breeding, meaning they are **indistinguishable from conventional and natural variants using current analytical methods.** These technical limitations present significant challenges in developing workable traceability systems for Category 1 NGT plants and products.
- Especially for imported feed and food, business operators will not be able to verify the presence of Category 1 NGT plants and products with analytical methods.

Harming the competitiveness of the food and feed supply chain and trade of Category 1 NGT plants by creating unjustified additional costs associated with the traceability and labelling of new genomic techniques (NGTs)

- Mandatory labelling would necessitate the physical segregation of the NGT products and commodities at each stage of the supply chain, multiplying storage and transport facilities, processing paths, and increasing costs. Given the bulk nature of the grains market such segregation would be impossible for most commodities and would negatively impact NGT plants and products' development and trade as well as cost-efficiency and competitiveness of the food and feed supply chain. It would

ultimately impede the development and uptake of NGT plants and products by entire value chains, while lead to raising prices to consumers at a time when food inflation is recognised as a sensitive issue in the EU².

- A recent study from Wageningen University³ highlights that such requirements could **reduce the economic benefits of conventional-like NGTs by up to 80%** and make their adoption economically non-viable. Mandatory traceability and labelling for Category 1 NGT products requires recordkeeping at all stages of the value chain and **comes with a cost in financial and human resources for seed breeders, farmers, primary food producers and for all operators along the chain**. This also results in administrative burdens for the entire supply chain, both in the EU and in third countries, which **cannot be justified by any science-based safety grounds**.

Discrimination and misleading consumers

- **Tracing and labelling similar products differently (Category 1 NGT plants and products vs. conventional) is clearly discriminatory** and could be wrongly perceived as a safety difference between conventional and Category 1 NGT plants and products. This could create confusion among consumers who generally lack the knowledge and understanding of the different breeding techniques being used already now for decades; also, Category 1 NGTs have been reviewed by EFSA⁴ and are deemed both safe and equivalent to conventionally bred plants.
- Such misperception is likely to result in consumers scepticism, making it difficult to market NGT plants and products. This could **disincentivise academic institutions, and companies, from start-ups and SMEs to bigger enterprises, to innovate in plant varieties adapted to the EU needs** that could - amongst many other things - contribute to a more competitive and sustainable EU agriculture and food and feed system.

Transparency of information

- The database listing the decisions declaring category 1 NGT plant status as foreseen in the Commission proposal **ensures sufficient transparency and choice for researchers as well as public and private seed breeders** who wish to use or avoid NGT1 plants.

² European Commission, Staff Working Document “Drivers of Food Security” SWD (2023) 4 final

³ <https://icabr.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Report-on-the-repercussions-associated-with-traceability-24-11-24.pdf>

⁴ EFSA (2020 & 2023) [Scientific opinion addressing the safety assessment of plants developed using Zinc Finger Nuclease 3 and other Site-Directed Nucleases with similar function - - 2012 - EFSA Journal - Wiley Online Library](#); [Scientific opinion on the ANSES analysis of Annex I of the EC proposal COM \(2023\) 411 \(EFSA-Q-2024-00178\)](#)

- Farmers, who will be the primary users of seed varieties obtained by category 1 NGT plants, make their selections based on the national variety lists or the EU Common Catalogue of Varieties including the information about the use of category 1 NGT plants and as mandated by the PRM (Plant Reproductive Material) legislation. This **ensures that the supply value chains can create differentiation responding to specific demands of certain consumers.**

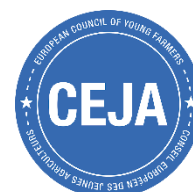
Global regulatory landscape

- More than 25 countries around the world have already implemented new policies for NGT plants. **None of them require any traceability and labelling of conventional-like NGT plants and products.** The number of regulatory decisions to exclude specific NGT plants from GMO regulations is increasing towards 300 around the world⁵. **Commodity suppliers and business operators from third countries would struggle to meet the scientifically unjustified EU-specific labelling requirements and would redirect their production towards markets with more enabling and fit-for purpose regulatory requirements.**

We, the undersigned agri-food value chain partners, urge the EU institutions to rapidly adopt a much-needed, fit-for-purpose, future-proof, proportionate and workable EU regulation for NGT plants and products. This will enable the European Union to develop plant breeding innovation adapted to EU's climate and environmental challenges, strengthening its competitiveness, while ensuring a level-playing field with third countries and preserving EU and global trade of NGTs.

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

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⁵ Plants 2024, 13, 3597. <https://doi.org/10.3390/plants13243597>

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