Press Release

Lunch seminar highlighting the Consumer Benefits of NGTs

21st May 2025 – Plants for Future ETP co-hosted in Brussels a lunch seminar to discuss the potential of New Genomics Techniques (NGTs) and how they can provide benefits for consumers. The lunch seminar was co-hosted by Lithuanian MEP Vytenis Andriukaitis from the S&D Group. He is currently a member of the Parliament Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety, and the Committee on Public Health, as well as a previous European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety.

The event aimed to highlight the tangible real world benefits NGTs provide, as well as to demonstrate the openness of consumers to accept such products, when they are sufficiently informed of those benefits.

The seminar kicked off with opening remarks from MEP Vytenis Andriukaitis, highlighting that Europe should aim to reap the great benefits science can bring. He also emphasised the importance of leveraging innovation for agriculture, to ensure we can feed a growing world population, adapt to climate change and protect natural resources.

"*Crop improvement has been done for centuries by means of conventional techniques, all leading to genetic changes in the plant. Today, innovative techniques represent the next step in plant breeding and allow us to make the desired genetic changes with very high efficiency and precision.*" MEP Vytenis Andriukaitis.

This was followed by a presentation by Richard Wells, from the UK start-up Tropic, which works to make innovative varieties of tropical crops using cutting-edge gene-editing. Richard provided an overview of some of Tropic's work, particularly on their reduced-browning banana, which reached the market this March. This product has the potential to reduce costs and food waste, while providing new opportunities and convenience for consumers. In addition, Tropic is working on developing new banana varieties with delayed ripening, resistance to Black Sigatoka Disease, and resistance to Panama Disease, which is posing an existential threat to global banana production.

"*It is important to have a practical and proportional regulatory framework, to facilitate start-ups and SME's market access for their groundbreaking NGT varieties*" Richard Wells, Tropic.

Jens Sundström, from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), then provided a summary of a recent report published on The public opinion in Sweden on gene-edited crops and farmed animals. This study highlighted the low awareness of the general public regarding NGTs, with about half of the respondents reporting having never heard of them. Despite this, the majority of respondents supported the use of NGTs to develop plant varieties, particularly when the new characteristic was deemed beneficial to the environment or society. Half the respondents supported a change in EU legislation to enable the use of NGTs in plants.

"*As a scientist and teacher it is encouraging that people with self-reported good knowledge about gene-editing, also tend to be positive towards its applications in agriculture. This tells me that gene-editing is not a politicised issue and that people still have an open mind*." Jens Sundström, SLU.

What followed was a lively discussion and exchange of views between participants from academia, the seed and breeding sector, the farming community and policymakers. The event was wrapped up with closing remarks from the Chair of Plants for the Future, César Gonzalez, highlighting the need to adapt current legislation in line with scientific progress, in order to leverage plant breeding innovation, like NGTs, This will provide benefits not only for consumers, but for agrifood players across the value chain.

For more about the event and to download the Press Release, see our Events Page.

Plants for the Future ETP (Plant ETP) is a multistakeholder European Technology Platform representing the plant sector, from the seed and breeding sector, the farming community and academia. Plant ETP brings stakeholders from the plant sector together to consider the challenges and opportunities of agricultural value chains in a holistic way, while developing a vision for future systems spanning food, feed, and biobased raw materials. In this way, Plant ETP provides strategic direction, recommendations of essential research and innovation, and science-based advice for the benefit of policymakers, research funding providers, practitioners, and innovators throughout agricultural value chains.