

THE ORGANIC FOOD AND FARMING MOVEMENT CALLS FOR THE REGULATION OF NEW GENETIC ENGINEERING TECHNIQUES AS GMOS

BONN and BRUSSELS, 15 JANUARY 2018 – During its General Assembly in New Delhi (India), on 12 November 2017, IFOAM - Organics International adopted a global [position](#) which reaffirms that GMOs created through new genetic engineering techniques have no place in organic food and farming systems. The organic sector re-affirms its commitment to consumers to effectively exclude GMOs from its production systems and urges policy-makers to regulate the use of GMOs obtained by recent techniques.

Markus Arbenz, Director of IFOAM - Organics International: “The unified position of the organic sector, based on science and on the [Principles of the Organic Agriculture](#) (Care, Ecology, Health and Fairness), is clear: new genetic engineering techniques are GMOs and must therefore not be used in organic production. The current absence of regulation for these new technologies in many parts of the world means that genetically modified plants and animals can be released in the environment with no risk assessment and no information for breeders, farmers and consumers. The organic movement calls on regulators to ensure transparency and traceability, and to safeguard producers’ and consumers’ freedom not to use untested genetic engineering techniques.”

IFOAM EU welcomes the adoption of this global position by the organic movement, which strengthens its own position adopted in December 2015, whereby all new genetic engineering techniques should be considered as techniques of genetic modification leading to GMOs and fall within the scope of the existing legislation on GMOs. In the European Union, on 18th January, the European Court of Justice will issue preliminary conclusions on whether some of the new genetic engineering techniques fall within the scope of the European legislation on GMOs ([Case C-528/16](#)). The final ECJ conclusions are expected by mid-2018.

Eduardo Cuoco, Director of IFOAM EU: “We trust that the ECJ will confirm that there are no legal or technical reasons to exclude these new genetic engineering techniques from the scope of the existing GMO regulations. A deregulation of these new genetic engineering techniques would unfairly force the organic sector to take extra measures to exclude GMOs from its production processes and would have severe economic consequences for the whole European agriculture, which is overwhelmingly free of GMOs.”

Eric Gall, IFOAM EU Policy Manager, added: “It is time for the European Commission to act in line with the precautionary principle to protect the environment and consumers by confirming that plants and animals genetically modified with new technologies will at least be regulated like existing GMOs, and be subject to rigorous risk assessment, traceability and labelling, which are cornerstones of EU environmental and food policies”.

In recent years several techniques, such as CRISPR/Cas9 or zinc finger nucleases have been experimented to directly modify the DNA of plants and animals. Contrary to transgenesis, they often do not entail the insertion of genes from other organisms, and are sometimes called “gene editing” or “new breeding techniques”. Scientific studies have shown that the purported greater precision of these newer techniques is a myth, as they may trigger many unintended changes in the genome of the modified organisms. For civil society and the organic movement, the use of such techniques is genetic engineering and raises similar risks and concerns as for existing GMOs, and should be regulated accordingly.

Ends.

Notes for editors:

Read the full position of [IFOAM - Organics International](#) and of [IFOAM EU](#).

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IFOAM – Organics International has been the global umbrella organisation for the organic movement in its full diversity since 1972. It has around 900 affiliates in 120 countries and has its Head Office in Bonn, Germany. More information: www.ifoam.bio

IFOAM EU represents more than 190 member organizations in the EU-28, the EU accession countries and EFTA. Member organizations span the entire organic food chain and beyond: from farmers and processors organisations, retailers, certifiers, consultants, traders and researchers to environmental and consumer advocacy bodies. More information: <http://www.ifoam-eu.org/>