



PRESS RELEASE

IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE CALLS ON MEPS TO POSTPONE PLENARY VOTE ON NGTS AS ENVI COMMITTEE VOTE LEAVES MANY ISSUES UNSOLVED

BRUSSELS, 24 JANUARY 2024 – Today, the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI Committee) voted on the legislative proposal on so-called “New Genomic Techniques” (NGTs) but many unresolved issues loom large.

“This rushed legislative process to deregulate NGTs goes against the interest of European breeders, farmers and citizens. Today’s vote by MEPs in the Environment committee leaves too many issues about risks, patents and the right of farmers and consumers to avoid NGTs, unsolved. Instead of rushing into a plenary vote, MEPs should properly discuss how to protect farmers, consumers and the environment from risks associated to NGTs”, said Jan Plagge, president of IFOAM Organics Europe, after the vote.

“Intellectual property rights attached to NGTs extend to genetic material and traits that can also be obtained by conventional breeding, and jeopardize the European model of innovation in breeding, based on the circulation of genetic resources among hundreds of SMEs. Claiming to address the patent issue with an amendment and a report is wishful thinking, but far behind reality. The only thing that currently protects farmers and breeders from legal threats from multinationals abusing the patent system to claim ownership over conventional breeding is the traceability and labelling system that applies to all GMOs including NGTs. How will MEPs explain to farmers that they choose to carelessly leave them exposed to patents and to hand over the seed breeding sector to a few big companies? Protecting the freedom of breeders and farmers to select their own seeds is a matter of European sovereignty that should be addressed before any deregulation of genetic engineering.”

IFOAM Organics Europe welcomes that a majority of MEPs from all political groups voted to maintain the ban of NGTs in organic production, but traceability provisions and coexistence measures that go beyond the minimum transparency on NGTs in seed lots proposed by the European Commission, are still necessary”, added Plagge. “It is significant that MEPs rejected amendments on “free movement of NGTs”, as this shows that a clear legal basis to allow Member States to take coexistence measures to protect the integrity of organic and conventional GMO-free production is possible and needed.”

The result of the vote in the ENVI committee has shown that key concerns about this controversial legislative proposal are left unanswered – the inevitable consequence of a rushed legislative process. Therefore, IFOAM Organics Europe is urging a delay in the plenary vote, which is currently set for the plenary for the beginning of February. Extended time is essential for fostering depoliticized, cross-party discussions that adequately address concerns related to biosafety, patents, and the establishment of a robust framework supporting the freedom of choice for both producers and consumers.

MEPs have so far maintained their voting calendar, even though a report from French food safety authority ANSES has recently put into question the scientific basis of the Commission’s proposal on the so-called equivalence criteria to classify a genetically modified crop as NGT1.

Ends.



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Background information

Positions

- [European organic movement's resolution on new GMOs](#)
- Global organic movement position paper on [Compatibility of breeding techniques in organic systems](#)

Other materials

- **[New]** Infographic "[New genomic techniques + patents = Ticking time bomb](#)"
- Briefing paper [Sustainability in organic breeding: Improving the entire system or adjusting some genes?](#)
- Watch our video and [learn about the issue with novel genomic techniques](#)
- [New GMOs – Key resources](#), living article which is updated periodically
- [Young German organic farmers calling for their right to choose](#) (in German, January 2023)
- [Our webpage on old and new GMOs](#)

IFOAM Organics Europe is the European umbrella organisation for organic food and farming. With almost 200 members in 34 European countries, our work spans the entire organic food chain and beyond: from farmers and processors organisations, retailers, certifiers, consultants, traders, and researchers to environmental and consumer advocacy bodies.

