

New Genomic Techniques

November 2023

IN BRIEF

Protecting the availability of plant varieties and innovating with New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) will bolster the resilience and security of our food supply chain.

In this paper, FoodDrinkEurope provides our key recommendations on a framework for plants and products obtained from NGTs.

KEY MESSAGES

Any framework on NGTs should:

- **Be a beacon of innovation for Europe's food future**
- **Bolster Europe's food supply and food security**
- **Be coherent with any existing and future legislation**
- **Align with similar regulatory practices around the world**

A framework for food-chain resilience

In recent years, a cascade of crises has called into question the resilience of Europe's food supply chain. Through Covid-19, the climate emergency, and more, Europe's food chain has delivered time and again to put food on the table. Achieving more sustainable food systems is essential to securing our food chain's resilience in the future and the EU food and drink industry is driving change across the food chain in line with the European Commission's Farm-to-Fork strategy.

With climate change and biodiversity loss increasingly affecting the productivity and resilience of the agricultural sector, we need to look to all available innovations to continue to feed people and the planet in the future. Protecting the availability of plant varieties and innovating with New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) will bolster the resilience and security of our food supply chain.

The European Commission's proposal can pave the way for plants obtained by NGTs. This regulation will require foresight to enable innovation, open access to technologies for SMEs, and a boost to competitiveness with our international trade partners.

A future-proof framework will have innovation and sustainable food systems at its core

Innovation in plant breeding is a key driver in delivering more sustainable and resilient crops, more secure harvests, and safe ingredients and food products. Plants obtained by certain NGTs and their food and feed should not be seen in isolation but as part of the bigger picture for more sustainable food systems.

Alongside integrated pest management, better soil health, and regenerative agriculture, the access to innovations such as NGTs will be crucial in the long term to help reduce farm inputs, and improve climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Essentials for a legislation for plants derived from NGT

The following considerations will be essential in ensuring a future-proof framework for NGTs:

- Sets clear procedures to ascertain where NGT plants and products are as safe as their conventional counterparts, while not entailing unnecessary regulatory burden
- Enables the development of plant varieties with specific and beneficial characteristics (e.g., agronomic, nutritional, health-related) that contribute to sustainable food systems
- Ensures that new NGT-derived plant varieties considered safe and conventional-like are handled equally along the supply chain without additional requirements

- Sets a future-proof framework that can adapt to scientific and technological development for plants derived from NGT, but also sets the foundation for extending the scope beyond plants
- Encourages breeding innovation and supports access for SMEs
- Provides a proportionate system facilitating trade within the European internal market and with our commercial partners worldwide

Essentials for a legislation for plants derived from NGT

1. **Future-proof food supply and food security:** The IPCC report on climate change underscores the need for further breeding innovation to mitigate its effects. FoodDrinkEurope and its members see the immense challenge faced by farmers of increasing demand for high-quality agricultural commodities while using limited resources and producing less emissions. Thus, farmers will need access to a wide range of tools to address ongoing and future challenges, notably climate change and plant diseases
2. **Legislative coherence and foresight:** A regulation on NGTs must first and foremost ensure strict policy coherence on food sustainability at various governance levels and with the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and other EU legislation and policies. These include, among others, the Biodiversity Strategy, Horizon Europe, the Common Agricultural Policy, the EU Taxonomy, the EU Beating Cancer Plan, and the Framework for Sustainable Food Systems.
3. **Trade and competitiveness with NGT-obtained commodities:** Modernising Europe's legislative framework for NGT plants and their products should align with similar practices in other regions of the world. Aligning with other regulatory practices around the world will help minimise regulatory divergence with trade partners, contribute to legal certainty and a level playing field for operators, and facilitate trade in agricultural commodities and food products.
4. **Gain consumer acceptance:** To build consumer acceptance and tap the potential of plants derived from NGTs, the European Commission and partners in the agri-food chain need to communicate clearly about their safety and benefits for society.

About us

The EU food and drink manufacturing industry is made up of 294,000 businesses employing 4.6 million people. It generates €230 billion in value added every year and is the largest manufacturing industry in terms of jobs created. As an industry comprised of 99% SMEs our enterprises are intimately linked with their local communities. FoodDrinkEurope is the organisation of the European food and drink manufacturing sector, committed to achieving more sustainable food systems.