



“New Genomic Techniques on stage at the European Parliament”

A workshop on New Genomic Techniques organized by the Social Democrat group took place at the European Parliament on the 10th October, 2023. This workshop is part of a series of activities organized from the Spanish Group to get feedback for the NGT proposal and generate the appropriate discussion environment that will be summarized by the Commission and presented to the European Parliament and Council for the legislative debate. All these necessary steps to have this piece of legislation approved and facilitate the use of NGTs and their products in Europe. The workshop was attended by around 100 people including MEPs from different countries and political sectors in EU, producers and breeders and other professional associations.

Currently, plants produced using NGTs are subject to the same strict, lengthy and costly procedures as GMOs. Under the proposed legislation, plants produced using NGTs that could also occur naturally or by conventional breeding will be subject to a verification procedure, based on criteria set in the proposal. The plants that meet these criteria are treated like conventional plants and therefore exempted from the requirements of the GMO legislation. These plants will not require a risk assessment, and they can be labeled in the same way as conventional plants. This will put farmers and seed companies under the same or similar conditions in many other leading countries. If accepted this regulation will be of obligated application in all EU Countries.

The new proposal only concerns plants produced by targeted mutagenesis and cisgenesis and their food and feed products. It does not include plants obtained by transgenesis, as such techniques remain subject to the existing GMO legislation.

In the workshop three MEPs from the S&D group Inmaculada Rodríguez Piñero, Clara Aguilera and Marcos Ros presented the current status of the NGT proposal and the opportunity that opened for EU and welcome the participants in the two panels. Irene Sacristán Head of the DGT that has taken a leading role in the preparation of the NGT proposal summarized the main aspects of the legislation.

The experts in the first panel included Jose Miguel Mulet (CSIC) and Marcos Egea Cortines (UPCT) that gave their views of the NGT and explained some of the details of the EC regulation of the plants derived from NGTs. Antonio Villarroel (general director of ANOVE) on the other hand presented the position of the ANOVE an association of seed companies in Spain that view NGT and the current proposal as strategic for their associates.

The second panel include two scientists from the academia: Antonio Granell (Research Professor at the IBMCP-CSIC), coordinator of HARNESSTOM and expert of the application of NGT in vegetables who presented the impact NGTs would have in the case of tomatoes should the current proposal be accepted in the EU, especially for improving their health and flavor composition and more specifically in the case of traditional vegetables that are normally out of the scope of seed companies. Ana Caño a leading scientist from CRAG emphasized the importance of the new legislation to would facilitate taking to the market innovations oftentimes resulting from research funded in Europe with the support of the EU. Finally, Fermin Azanza Head of Research at Limagrain Seeds presented the view if his seed company and their support of the new regulation on NGTs that they are already using outside the EU.





All agreed that accepting the approval of the new regulation is crucial for the EU agriculture competitiveness and also to guarantee food security and sovereignty in the EU and to be able to cope with all the challenges and treats we are facing. To incorporate scientific progress and to facilitate the development of new varieties in the European Union to level competition with the rest of the production systems in the world.

The results from this workshop and all the feedback received will be summarized to other feedback received by the Commission and presented to the European Parliament and Council for the legislative debate.

In late July, EU's Agriculture Ministers met in Granada to discuss the Commission's proposal for the first time. The discussion saw many ministers welcome the Commission's proposed loosening of NGT rules as a building block for sustainable farming, while others voiced concerns over potential risks but the NGT meeting at the EP emphasized this is a top priority in the Agenda of the Spanish delegation and current EU presidency.



Photo: Spanish Delegation at the Workshop on NGT that took place at European Parliament on the 10th of October. Picture at the front door of the European Parliament. From left to right Fermin Azanza (Limagrain Group), Antonio Villarroel (Anove), Ana Caño (CRAG, CSIC), Antonio Granell (IBMCP-CSIC), José Luis (Levante Newspaper), Jose Miguel Mulet (UPV), Victor (El Confidential newspaper), Marcos Egea (UP Cartagena).

