



Response of the Netherlands to the inception impact assessment on legislation for plants produced by certain new genomic techniques

The Netherlands welcomes the initiative of the European Commission to take policy action for plants obtained by targeted mutagenesis and cisgenesis. We are glad with this development and agree with the Commission that these technologies can play an important role in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Green Deal. The Netherlands thanks the Commission for the opportunity to respond to the inception impact assessment. We look forward to the future discussions and further actions on this topic.

We agree with the Commission's conclusion of the study on new genomic techniques (NGTs)¹: the current legislation on genetically modified organisms is no longer fit for purpose and needs to be adapted to scientific and technological progress. We are pleased to read that the upcoming policy initiative retains the objectives of the current legislation regarding protection of human and animal health and the environment, while also enabling innovation and keeping up with scientific developments.

The Netherlands agrees that plants (and their products) derived from cisgenesis and targeted mutagenesis are equally safe as plants produced with classical mutagenesis or conventional breeding techniques. In view of the differing opinions on biotechnology and new genomic techniques, good objective information to the public, appropriate labelling, and consultations of the public are crucial.

Biotechnological progress will continue at a fast pace. It is important that legislation reflects the most current scientific knowledge and insights to ensure that biotechnology takes place under safe conditions. For the Netherlands, further modernisation of biotechnology policy to accomplish future-proof, harmonised and effective legislation is important. This needs to lead to legislation that ensures safety for humans, animals and the environment, enables reaping the benefits of biotechnology and is proportionate to the possible risks involved.

As stated in the inception impact assessment, the current legislation leaves room for legal uncertainties. For example, in our view, the suggestion in the study on NGTs that organisms altered by epigenetic techniques would fall under the scope of the GMO legislation, warrants further discussion. As the current policy initiative will not completely address the legal uncertainties, it would be advisable to continue to work on more clarity regarding the scope of the GMO legislation. The Netherlands would welcome discussions on this topic. In addition, we welcome the stated intention of the Commission to continue to build up more scientific knowledge on other NGTs, and animals and microorganisms modified with NGTs. We also look forward to discussing efficient and proportionate regulatory oversight for NGTs in medicinal products in the scope of the Pharmaceutical Strategy.

¹ [EC study on new genomic techniques \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/euro-iss/press/20210511-ec-study-on-new-genomic-techniques)