Plantum

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About: Plantum response to Inception Impact Assessment on "Legislation for plants produced by certain new genomic techniques"

Plantum is the Dutch association for plant breeders and young-plant growers. Plantum welcomes the EU Commission initiative on plants obtained by targeted mutagenesis & cisgenesis. We fully support the conclusions from its study on new genomic techniques (NGTs) that plants made with NGTs have the potential to speed up breeding and contribute significantly to the EU Green Deal & the UN SDGs. Plantum therefore stresses the **urgency of a legislative initiative** to fully benefit from this contribution. Fair legislation is sorely needed to ensure that we create an international (EU vs non EU) level playing field and everyone can benefit from these new technologies, **especially SMEs**. The current legislation **poses a steep financial and administrative burden** for breeders, which any **new future-proof** legislation should aim to overcome.

Targeted mutagenesis & cisgenesis can be used to produce changes in genetic material that can also result from spontaneous processes in nature or conventional breeding; therefore, Plantum holds the view that a **different regulatory oversight for similar products is not justified** and negatively impacts innovation.

Plantum agrees with the conclusion of the EU Commission that the current **GMO legislation is no longer fit for purpose** and needs adaptation to scientific and technological progress. Plantum supports the conclusions by EFSA that certain plants obtained by NGTs do **not pose new hazards** compared to plants developed by conventional breeding[1].
Plantum supports the conclusion of the Commissions earlier study that there are no reliable detection methods for NGTs, for example in relation to natural and induced mutations or checks for imported material from outside the EU. As such, compulsory tracing and labelling is unenforceable. Instead Plantum proposes to focus on **transparency and information sharing**, and fully supports customer/consumer choice. Plant breeders already provide information regarding breeding techniques to their customers when required for e.g. certain private certification standards. This approach could also be suitable for products resulting from NGTs.
The Dutch sector for starting materials is adamant on tackling the challenges that climate change poses. Newly developed varieties can have a major contribution towards solving these challenges, regardless of the breeding method used. Introducing **sustainability criteria on NGT plants and products will not reduce administrative or financial burdens**, but rather increase them, mainly affecting SMEs. Therefore Plantum does not support the introduction of sustainability criteria for NGT plants and products.
Plantum acknowledges the importance of the protection of plant-related innovations. Also, it is our view that **broad access to breeding technologies** that are protected by intellectual property is an important precondition and objective of the sector to bring innovation to all markets and stakeholders, **including SMEs**. Plantum recommends that the Commission encourages licensing platforms like the ILP Vegetable[2] & the company initiative for an "Agricultural Crop Licensing Platform"[3] which is currently being developed.

[1] Naegeli, H. et al., 2020, Applicability of the EFSA Opinion on site-directed nucleases type 3 for the safety assessment of plants developed using site-directed nucleases type 1 and 2 and oligonucleotidedirected
Mutagenesis, EFSA Journal doi: 10.2903/j.efsa.2020.6299
[2] https://www.ilp-vegetable.org/
[3] https://european-seed.com/2021/08/easing-access-to-patented-traits-for-further-breeding/

Kind regards,

Niels Louwaars
Managing director