

## Euro Coop position on NGTs

The following policy paper represents Euro Coop's view exclusively and doesn't preclude our members from taking different positions.

### Juridical interpretation and general considerations

Two main characteristics of the most common NGTs have conditioned our final evaluation on whether or not genetic induced mutations should fall under the exemption provided for by Annex I B of the Directive 18/2001.

The first consideration is that, despite NGTs doesn't recur to rDNA to add the transgene to the receiving DNA, they do still require the biological scissor to be created outside the cell, just like the transgene package.

Secondly, NGTs make use of the same techniques for bringing the external construct (the biological scissors) into the cell (through bacteria, viruses or biolistic) raising the same questions about how precise these inclusions can result and with which unintended consequences.

When it comes to the juridical interpretation of the meaning of the exemptions provided for in Art. 3 and Annex I B of the Directive referred to genetic mutations, Euro Coop fully endorses the Judgement of the ECJ.

We found ECJ's arguments particularly accurate when underlining that mutations are indeed genetic modifications covered by the Directive but for the exemptions that need to be read in conjunction with recital 17 of the Directive, that narrows down this derogation to those mutagenesis techniques that have a long safety history.

The fact that NGTs make use of molecules assembled outside the cell in a way which cannot be expected to happen in nature and that are then forced into the receiving cell, qualify them as transgenic techniques as defined in Article 2.2.a and in Annex IA.

It's worth remembering that the list of techniques in Annex I A is to be considered as non exhaustive as it is anticipated by the wording "inter alia".

Considering the differences among old and new genetic techniques, Euro Coop believes that the Directive should be reviewed so as to clarify some ambiguous and poorly defined terms, to extend the rules to clearly include NGTs among transgenic techniques and their products among GMOs.

Taking into account the difficulties that are expected among the reference labs to detect NGTs products, Euro Coop believes that applications to put new NGTs products on the market should include the information of the technique used, the targeted site and the changes induced.

Furthermore, the revision should extend the research of unexpected changes and effects of NGTs by supporting a wider use of the so called “omics” sciences and techniques.

We see these changes in legislation as necessary in order to ensure that NGTs products are identifiable by consumers who should retain the right to exert an informed decision whether to use them.

Even though the scope of this paper is to answer to the questions posed in terms of legislative interpretation, we would like to stress that we see NGTs as techniques that support intensive, industrial, proprietor, monocultural cultivations, and a food and feed production model that is not in line with our approach and values.

Euro Coop would thus consider it inappropriate to support and promote the use of NGTs in the agri-food sector in the frame of the Farm to Fork strategy and Food Sustainability Law.

On the other hand, we do encourage to improve plant varieties and animal races by applying the advanced knowledge of genetics and molecular biology to speed up the selection procedures among progenies obtained through natural breeding (i.e. Marker Assisted Selection, microsatellites, SNPs etc).

To that regard, we think that an open source, no-proprietor breeding scheme like the one carried out by the University of Davis (California, USA) named “MAS wheat”, could represent a valid model for the development of improved plant and animal varieties at EU level.

Finally, Euro Coop is particularly concerned about the wide societal implications linked to the “gene drive” technology and calls for an urgent definition of its possible application in organisms deemed to be released in an open environment particularly in endemic areas of targeted species.

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