

Aina Bartmann, 17th of November 2022
GMO-free-region event.

Comment-nordic countries (3 minutes)

Thank you for the invitation.

The Nordic countries have a long history of close collaboration, including farming and local food traditions.

In *The New Nordic Food manifesto* published in 2004, the first goal is to express the purity, the freshness, the simplicity, and the ethics we wish to associate with our region.

How does GMO fit into this vision?

According to several surveys the majority of Nordic citizens are critical to GMOs and want all of them to be regulated!

Since 2019 many organisations from civil society have worked together in what we call The Nordic GMO Network.

We are different organisations with different opinions on the possible benefits of future GMOs. But we all support the ruling by the European Court of Justice in 2018.

All GMOs – including gene edited organisms - must be risk assessed and monitored. And *if* a GMO is approved, it must be traceable and labelled. This is our *minimum* demand and must be cornerstones in any future legislation.

The Nordic GMO Network also underlines that future regulation must take into account the rapid development within gene technology.

Gene drives is one example of reckless use of GMOs, but gene editing direct in the field as with the RNAi-spray, and other examples of gene modification outside the laboratories shows that we need a *wide definition* of GMOs, and that they must be risk assessed, case by case.

With cheaper and more accessible methods for gene modification, the scope of use, and the pace of released GMOs will in itself represent a new type of risk.

The ECJ ruling allows us to balance the need for research and innovation and the need to keep a high level of protection for health and environment.

Only by regulating GMOs are we able to say YES to the products we want (*if we want any*) for instance products that can contribute to sustainable development, and NO the products we do not want.

And, coming from Norway where sustainability is a key requirement in our Gene Technology Act, it is important for me to be very clear:

Sustainability can never be reduced to a question about single traits in a plant or an animal.

Sustainability is about environmental, economic, and social justice in a global perspective.

This requires fundamental changes in our food systems in order to achieve food security/sovereignty, protect biodiversity and stop climate change.