

Agriculture and food production without genetic engineering at risk

Berlin, 9 January 2024

Dear Mr Weber,

We are reaching out to you as representatives of leading businesses in the food industry in Germany and beyond.

We are very concerned about the law currently being discussed by the European Parliament and the Council of Agriculture Ministers to regulate new genomic techniques (NGT). The current draft legislation on NGT will determine whether there will be agriculture and food production without genetic engineering in the EU in the future.

As businesses in the food sector, we know that many consumers are skeptical about genetically modified products and want to decide for themselves whether they want to buy and eat them. We want to continue to be able to produce and offer products without the use of genetic engineering. In 2022, 16 billion euros were generated in Germany alone with conventional food labelled "Ohne Gentechnik" (Non-GMO) and 15.3 billion euros in the Organic sector.

Competition thrives on differentiation. The market segment for food produced without GMO should continue to exist in the interest of a diverse range of products and our customers.

Biodiversity in nature and agriculture is a central component of sustainability and thus of the Green Deal's farm-to-fork strategy. This requires that there will continue to be agricultural areas without GMO in the future.

The European People's Party, which you lead, has a key role to play in the negotiations on legislation on new genetic engineering. It is the largest political group in the European Parliament and appoints the rapporteur in the responsible Environment Committee. It depends on the EPP whether transparency and freedom of choice will continue to apply to new genetic engineering products for Europe's consumers and economic operators in the future and whether EU organic farming can continue to operate without GMO, in line with the global consensus.

We are therefore very concerned that the EPP wants to enforce legal regulations that would result in 94 percent of all products produced with new genetic engineering (category 1 NGTs) remaining unlabelled and thus not being recognisable as such on the market. Your group goes even beyond the EU Commission. While its legislative proposal at least provides for the labelling of genetically modified seeds, the EPP rapporteur's draft removes even this minimum requirement for transparency - and thus the basis for the traceability and labelling of genetically modified products. While the EU Commission's draft explicitly stipulates the exclusion of category 1 NGTs in organic farming, the EPP wants to lift this ban. In doing so, it is opposing the will of the entire European Organic sector.

Hundreds of thousands of businesses in both the Organic sector and the conventional "Ohne Gentechnik" sector have invested in functioning value chains over the last decades on the basis of the EU Organic Regulation and national "Ohne Gentechnik" legislation and have built up markets worth billions. These businesses are jeopardised if they can no longer reliably keep NGT products out of their value chains. Consumers rightly expect that products produced organically and "Ohne Gentechnik" do not contain genetic engineering.

We therefore urge you and your parliamentary group to revise your current position.

We ask you to respect our entrepreneurial freedom to produce and sell products without GMO and to support the legal requirements that we need in order to remain capable of acting: Traceability, labelling for all NGTs and for EU-wide binding coexistence rules for agriculture and food production with and without GMO.

We ask you to acknowledge products without GMO as an important competitive advantage of European agriculture and food production both on the domestic EU market and on world markets.

We ask you not to jeopardise successful markets worth billions that have been created by farmers and businesses in the food industry.

We are at your disposal for an appointment.

Kind regards

Signatories

Felix Ahlers, Chairman of the Executive Board, FRoSTA AG

Kerstin Erbe, Managing Director Product Management, dm-drogerie markt GmbH + Co. KG

Irmgard Freidler, Managing Director, ALB-GOLD Teigwaren GmbH

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